

Right Turn

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*John T. Flynn
and the Transformation
of American Liberalism*

John E. Moser



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For Monica, my wife, my partner, my best friend.

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Introduction

In 2000 the *New American*, the official magazine of the John Birch Society, listed twenty-five of its “heroes for all time.” The list included, among others, Francisco Franco, Augusto Pinochet, and Joseph McCarthy, all of whom, the editors claimed, helped to prevent the triumph of “the Total State,” thus saving “our Christian-style civilization.”¹ However, one of those on the list is considerably less famous than the others—the journalist and economist John T. Flynn. Flynn, writes author John F. McManus, was one of the few to fight “for limited government and noninterventionism against the rising tides of socialism and militarism” and therefore was “the ultimate ‘Old Right’ conservative.”²

The name of John T. Flynn might be unfamiliar today, but it would have been readily recognizable to any American who followed public affairs from the late 1920s through the 1950s. As a newspaper columnist, freelance magazine writer, best-selling author, and widely recognized expert on economics, finance, politics, and foreign affairs, his words were read by millions. In addition, his membership on the New York City Board of Higher Education and his chairmanship of the city’s chapter of the anti-interventionist America First Committee made him a well-known and controversial figure in the city’s local politics. The regard in which Far Right groups such as the John Birch Society hold Flynn is in many ways understandable. In the 1930s he developed a stinging critique of Franklin Roosevelt, the New Deal, and internationalism that would play a significant role in the resurgence of conservatism that took place in the United States after the end of World War II. In addition, his warnings about the threat of communist subversion—expressed in books with such titles as *The Road Ahead: America’s Creeping Revolution* and *While You Slept: Our Tragedy in Asia and Who Made It*—would have a profound influence on the grassroots right-wing organizations that sprang up in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Yet the *New American*'s words of praise for Flynn would have come as a considerable surprise to those whose primary exposure to the writer had come from his columns in the *New Republic* in the 1930s. During that period, when the *New Republic* was in the vanguard of American liberalism, Flynn was an associate editor of the magazine, with a weekly column on economics called "Other People's Money." In that forum he complained regularly about what he saw as the excessive salaries of corporate executives, demanded the complete breakup of holding companies, and gave public support to national economic planning. He repeatedly denounced wealthy industrialists and financiers such as Henry Ford and J. P. Morgan, asserting that "there is in society no section so given to violence as the conservative, property-loving section."³

Nor were these the only examples of Flynn's affiliation with the non-Marxist left. He was on the editorial board of the progressive journal *Common Sense*. During his years on New York City's Board of Higher Education, he defended left-wing students who protested the presence of the ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) at City College and fought for the appointment of Bertrand Russell to a chair in that college's department of philosophy. He detested Herbert Hoover, disdained conservatives—especially members of the American Liberty League—who criticized the New Deal, and mocked those who expressed fears of communism. Moreover, he was a close friend of America's best-known socialist, Norman Thomas, and although he personally denied being a socialist, he endorsed Thomas's candidacy for president in 1936. Yet this same John T. Flynn emerged during World War II as a convinced enemy of "collectivism," an adviser to the Republican National Committee, and a dedicated champion of Joseph McCarthy's crusade against communism. Indeed, by the end of his career Flynn had moved far beyond the mainstream of even the Republican Party, embracing an agenda that was virtually identical to that of the John Birch Society.

A vivid illustration of this mixed legacy appeared in the *New York Times* soon after Flynn's death in 1964. His obituary, which appeared in the April 14 edition of the *Times*, referred to him as a "man of wide-ranging contradictions" who in his final days called for the repeal of the income tax, U.S. withdrawal from the United Nations, and the repudiation of all Supreme Court decisions made since 1937. However, several days later the newspaper printed a letter to the editor from Ordway Tead, a prominent member of New York City's Board of Higher Education. Tead lamented that Flynn's obituary "did not seem to those of us with whom

he worked to give the emphasis which was his just due upon the earlier phases of his career prior to his sharp turn to the right.” Tead reminded readers that during the 1930s Flynn directed the same “enthusiasm and fighting spirit” that he demonstrated throughout his life toward a number of worthy causes, most notably the founding of Queens College. “Whatever is one’s estimate of his later career,” Tead concluded, Flynn did far more to further “democratic educational administration than those only familiar with his more recent work might imagine.”⁴

This book examines the career of John T. Flynn with an eye toward explaining this mixed legacy. In a sense it is not only about Flynn but also about the very concept of liberalism in the mid-twentieth century; for what is perhaps most interesting about Flynn’s ideological odyssey is that he himself consistently denied that he had embarked on one. To the end of his life he never referred to himself as anything but a liberal—but, in the words of Michele Flynn Stenehjem, he was a “liberal betrayed.” Flynn claimed that it was the American political climate that changed during his lifetime, not he. Indeed, he believed that the very term *liberal* had been hijacked; as he wrote to New Deal lawyer Jerome Frank in 1940, “I see the standard of liberalism that I have followed all my life flying over a group of causes which, as a liberal along with all liberals, I have abhorred all my life.”⁵

Not surprisingly, most of Flynn’s contemporaries rejected his claim to consistency. Writers and commentators of the 1950s and early 1960s, including the historians of the “consensus” school, were unanimous in characterizing him as a “former liberal” who in his later years repudiated his early beliefs in favor of “ultra-conservatism.” But beginning in the 1970s, as part of a larger Vietnam-era effort to rehabilitate those who had opposed an interventionist U.S. foreign policy, certain authors on both the Left and the Right engaged in a reconsideration of Flynn’s record. Then-radical Ronald Radosh was perhaps the first to characterize him as a member of the so-called Old Right who had waged a more or less consistent battle against the welfare state at home and internationalism abroad. Similarly, libertarian writer Sheldon Richman has referred to Flynn as a “Jeffersonian” and a “progressive isolationist.”⁶

In recent years other scholars have placed Flynn in a different context, suggesting that he represented a tradition that was, in a sense, “beyond left and right.” Michael Kazin, for instance, places Flynn squarely within the tradition of American populism; his nemesis was simply “the governing elite,” whether it consisted of Wall Street bankers or Columbia law

professors. In a similar vein, David A. Horowitz identifies Flynn as an “insurgent” who defended the traditional producer ethic of Jeffersonian individualism against the rise of a society dominated by both large corporations and government bureaucracy.⁷

It is the argument of this work that although Flynn’s views evolved (or devolved, depending on one’s views) to a significant extent over the course of his life, he remained more or less consistently faithful to a set of core principles. However, far from being the principles of populism, conservatism, or classical liberalism, his views were very much in keeping with the progressivism of the professional middle class. Central to these was a basic faith in existing institutions (namely, democratic capitalism), tempered by a belief in the efficacy of government action (particularly at the federal level) to deal with the abuses that frequently crept into these institutions. Most important, Flynn placed a high value on the ability of professional social scientists, untainted by association with the business community or any other selfish interest, to impose order on the chaos brought about by unrestrained competition.⁸

In some ways Flynn’s ambiguous political position was one of his greatest assets in his campaign against the New Deal. While he originally had high hopes for the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, which he believed would bring about much-needed reforms, he quickly concluded that the New Deal was at best a fraud, at worst a conspiracy to destroy the republic. But in an age in which the president was extremely popular, and in which his opponents in organizations such as the American Liberty League could be easily dismissed with such epithets as “economic royalists,” Flynn’s connection to unquestionably left-leaning media outlets such as the *New Republic* forced liberals and conservatives alike to take his words seriously. Eventually his views drove away his old friends and allies on the left, but he was embraced with even greater enthusiasm by his former opponents on the right. As one historian wrote in the 1950s, “the fact that even a liberal could not stand Roosevelt was indeed a potent and gratifying argument which served to show that real Americans, liberals or conservatives, should fight that man in the White House.”⁹

However we define Flynn’s political ideology, there is no denying that he was a controversial figure in his time. By the 1950s he had achieved something like cult status on the far right; a close associate wrote in 1953 that wealthy Texans “now seem to have three main gods: [General Douglas] MacArthur, [Senator Joseph] McCarthy, and Flynn.” Opponents

characterized him as “the authentic dean of the conspiracy and demonology school of journalism.” Others claimed he was consumed with “bitter hatred” for Roosevelt and accused him of anti-Semitism. Yet all agreed that he was a talented writer. Frank E. Mason, who had worked as a copy editor for several of Flynn’s books, called him “one of the best writing craftsmen I ever knew,” while even his enemies granted that he was an effective polemicist.¹⁰

Flynn was an extremely prolific author, having to his credit no fewer than nineteen books and thousands of articles. In addition to his weekly column in the *New Republic*, which he had for nearly ten years, he also wrote for much of his career a daily newspaper column, one that eventually appeared in all the papers of the Scripps-Howard chain. On top of that, on and off during the 1930s and early 1940s and consistently in the late 1940s and 1950s, he had a weekly radio program. R. Douglas Stuart, executive director of the America First Committee, described him as “a person of limitless energy who constantly undertakes more than any one human being can do.” Even his bitterest opponents were amazed by his “tremendous drive and output.”¹¹

Most would also agree that, although he was hardly humorless, Flynn had a hot temper. In some ways he lived up to the stereotype of the “fighting Irishman,” quick to take umbrage at personal slights and seldom prepared to submit to authority. He wrote to a staff member of the Senate Interstate Commerce Committee that the best thing Senator Carter Glass (Dem.-Virginia) could do for his country would be “to get the hell off this earth.” He was also notoriously unwilling to take criticism from those he considered fools. On one such occasion, after being asked to lower his voice in the main reading room of the New York Public Library, he wrote an angry letter to the director in which he expressed his “outrage” at this “humiliation” and promised to make a point to visit the main reading room “as little as possible, rather than subject myself to its rudeness.” He could hold a grudge for years. For example, at a social event in 1950 he refused to shake the hand of Richard L. Simon of Simon and Schuster. When a confused Simon wrote him to ask why, Flynn explained that it was because nearly ten years earlier the publishing company had “suppressed” one of his books by refusing to give it the publicity that it was due.¹²

This combination of work ethic and temper led many to express concerns about his health. On numerous occasions his friends pleaded with him to take a vacation, or at the very least a few days off. Even his opponents seemed to worry about him; a confidential investigation of him

launched by the organization Friends of Democracy suggested that he was “chronically on the border of a nervous breakdown from over-writing and over-speaking.” In the midst of a radio debate in 1941, one of Flynn’s opponents, alarmed by the sight of his red face and bulging veins, exclaimed, “Watch your blood pressure, John!”¹³ Such expressions of concern frequently served only to make him angrier—in the aforementioned debate, Flynn snapped back that there was nothing wrong with his blood pressure—but there is no denying that his health eventually began to fail him, particularly after World War II. Of course, by this time he was well into his sixties, but he stubbornly refused to retire until 1960—less than four years before his death. Until that time he never ceased denouncing the direction in which the United States was headed, in politics, in economics, in culture, and in foreign affairs. And all the while, he continued to call himself a liberal.

Flynn was, in short, “fighting mad”—a phrase one reviewer used to characterize what he imagined Flynn’s state of mind must have been as he wrote one of his later books.¹⁴ He was a true believer who dedicated himself body and soul to whatever cause he chose to support, but who time and again felt let down by others whom he saw as placing personal greed and ambition before principle. Indeed, an examination of his papers suggests a man who subordinated everything else—including family—to his agenda. (It is a telling fact that in his voluminous correspondence there is almost no mention even of his wife and his son.) Charles Tuttle, a fellow member of the Board of Higher Education with whom Flynn frequently clashed, perhaps put it best: “John Flynn was, by nature, a militant and an individualist. Both of these are perfectly admirable, but he would carry them to great extremes.”¹⁵ He was indeed a man of extremes, and while this might lead one to question how happy a life he led, it undoubtedly makes him a fascinating subject for a biographer—and, it is hoped, for the reader as well.

Irish Exaggerations

One of the most frustrating problems that anyone faces in attempting to trace the life and career of John T. Flynn is that so little evidence exists regarding his personal and family life. This is especially the case when it comes to his younger years; only the sketchiest of information exists for the first forty-odd years of his life. All those who knew him on a close personal basis are now deceased, and those members of his extended family who remain are—perhaps understandably—reluctant to talk to researchers about such a controversial member of their clan.¹

In early 1942, Flynn, then in the midst of an extended illness, began taking notes for what he expected to become his autobiography, and these notes currently reside in his manuscript collection at the University of Oregon. They are, to be sure, useful, but perhaps more revealing at times of his attitudes in 1942 than of his life as a young man. As will be seen, Flynn in later life would occasionally misrepresent his own past opinions so as to make it appear that he remained wholly consistent throughout his career.²

What is certain is that he was born John Thomas Flynn on October 25, 1882, in the town of Bladensburg, Maryland, on the outskirts of Washington, D.C. His parents were John (a lawyer who practiced in the local community) and Margaret Donovan Flynn. By his own account, Flynn was raised “in a good Catholic home where respect for one’s parents and superiors and all constituted authority was deeply ingrained in me.” In good Irish Catholic fashion, he was educated in parochial schools in which he was further taught to revere “the rulers of our country as men of towering wisdom and vast knowledge and burning patriotism.” At the age of twelve he was deeply impressed when his father brought him to the nation’s capital, where he looked “with a kind of awe upon the Capitol [and] the White House.” The highlight of the boy’s trip, however, was a brief meeting with a U.S. senator. Recalling this event nearly fifty years later, Flynn wrote of this meeting:

I do not recall his name save that he had large whiskers and seemed to me to be the most impressive and awe-inspiring being I had ever stood in the presence of.³

While he was still a child, his father moved the family—which by this time included three girls as well—to New York City. There Flynn completed his primary and secondary education (again in parochial schools) before attending a small college that, he would later write, “was hardly better than a high school is today.” Early on he began to display an interest in writing; he claimed to have begun his first novel at the age of thirteen, using “a discarded ledger of which only the first few pages had been written on.” He decided to name his masterpiece *Pizarro* but abandoned the project after finishing only the title page, table of contents, and the words “The End.” He thereafter turned his attention to writing poetry, but hardly got any further before tossing that aside in favor of a short story.⁴

Flynn must have been an exceptional student, because before his eighteenth birthday he was awarded a scholarship to attend law school at Georgetown University. He was thrilled at the idea of returning to Washington, the city that had so impressed him as a boy. By his own account, he found the place “fascinating.” He later claimed to have arrived there at a particularly exciting moment, as the Senate was at that time in the midst of a heated debate on the subject of imperialism. The country had recently fought a victorious war against Spain, and the question of what was to be done about the Philippine Islands—from which the Spanish had been driven in 1898—was a matter of heated dispute. What was at stake was nothing less than the future of American foreign policy: whether the country would for the first time take on responsibility for territory outside the Western Hemisphere—indeed, not far from the coast of Asia.⁵

According to Flynn’s own later accounts, he was very much caught up in the excitement of the times. He had arrived having “swallowed the whole dose of patriotism that was served up very hot then.” Admiral George Dewey, the victor of the 1898 Battle of Manila Bay, made his triumphal return to Washington the day after Flynn’s own arrival in the city, and the young John T. was in the forefront of what was being called “Dewey Fever.” However, he claimed, the fires of jingoism within him cooled considerably as he watched, from the Senate galleries, the great debate over the fate of the Philippines. Although originally inclined to accept American dominion over the islands, he was deeply impressed by the words of Massachusetts Republican George F. Hoar. Hoar had listened

carefully to the arguments of those who sought to annex the Philippines but then said that he had “listened in vain for those words which the American people have been wont to take upon their lips in every solemn crisis of their history . . . the words Right, Justice, Duty, Freedom.” To Hoar, the best response to those who would tempt America with colonies was the same answer that Christ gave to the devil: “Get thee behind me, Satan.”⁶

Flynn claimed that it was at that moment that he abandoned his youthful flirtation with imperialism and committed himself thereafter to fighting against foreign entanglements. No doubt this version of events appealed to his sense of the dramatic and fit in well with Flynn’s later reputation as a leading anti-interventionist, but it is likely a prime example of what his secretary, Rosalie Gordon, called “his Irish exaggerations.” Admiral Dewey arrived in Washington in October 1899, and Hoar gave his famous speech against the annexation of the Philippines in January 1900. Yet Flynn, by his own account, returned to Washington to begin his studies at Georgetown just short of his eighteenth birthday—which would have been in the summer or early autumn of 1900, months after the fate of the Philippines had already been decided.⁷

Although Flynn’s academic record at Georgetown remains a mystery, his years in law school were apparently happy ones. He was involved in a number of extracurricular activities, including the glee club and the debating society (he was known for his mellifluous voice). Moreover, despite being fairly slight in build—his adult weight was around 140 pounds, although he was five feet, nine inches in height—he remained physically active and was known to have a particular fondness for boxing. He also pursued his interest in writing, working part time as a reporter for the *Washington Times*.⁸

Either Flynn must have especially enjoyed working for a newspaper or he decided that he was ill-suited for a career in law (perhaps both), for after working only a short time in his father’s law office in New York City, he decided to return to journalism. Details on his life during this period are extremely sparse, but apparently he held a number of jobs on New York newspapers before moving to the West Coast in 1912. It was also during this period that he married Alice Bell, on April 7, 1910. Soon thereafter Alice gave birth to two sons, John and Thomas, the former of whom died as a teenager.⁹

Flynn had moved his family to San Francisco in May 1912, lured by rumors that positions in journalism were plentiful. However, this turned

out not to be the case. After several months of searching in the Bay Area, the family relocated to southern California, where Flynn found a low-paying job working for a Los Angeles newspaper. After a few years, though, he concluded that he was unable to support his family on his current salary. Disillusioned, he returned to the East in 1916 to take a position as a reporter for the *New Haven Register*.¹⁰

Flynn did very well at the *Register*, so that within a year he had become city editor. However, the job did little to improve his financial fortunes, as the newspaper's owner, John Day Jackson, was notorious for the low wages he paid his employees. Here again, Flynn's memories of this period seemed to change with time. In the notes he wrote for his projected autobiography, he painted his former boss in admiring colors. Jackson, he wrote, had taken over the paper thanks to the incompetence of its former owner, who spent his time issuing "daily his decretals and encyclicals on all manner of subjects" while "the unpaid bills for paper, ink and equipment piled up in the business office." Within a few years of Jackson's acquisition of the *Register* it had become the city's leading newspaper with a massive circulation, "while all the others limped along, growing weaker, chiefly for lack of intelligent and competent management."¹¹

This may have been Flynn's attitude roughly twenty-five years after the fact, but at the time his views of Jackson were far less charitable. Indeed, he complained that at the *Register* he "worked like a galley slave" yet never received a raise, despite numerous requests. To supplement his income he took on a second job, drawing cartoons and posters for print shops during the little spare time he had. This treatment led Flynn in 1919 to take the lead in forming a union—the News Writers' Equity Association of New Haven—made up of nearly all the city's reporters and editorial workers. When publishers refused to consider the union's demands for higher wages, a strike was called. Newspaper owners reacted with horror; some suspected a Bolshevik plot to silence the presses. Jackson chose to respond simply by firing all his employees who belonged to the union, and the *Register* continued publication through the use of business staff and replacement workers.¹²

At this point Flynn and some of the other striking newspapermen launched their own small daily, which they called the *Reporter*. However, the project was doomed from the start, as it relied on contributions from a few sympathetic local businessmen and reporters from across the country. Within a few weeks, Flynn and the other editors were forced to scale back its operations, so that the newspaper went from being a daily to a

semi-weekly. This enabled it to limp along for few months, but by the end of 1919 the *Reporter* was no more.¹³

After this setback Flynn found a job back in New York City, on the news desk of the evening *Globe*, then the oldest continuously operating daily newspaper in the United States.¹⁴ The atmosphere at the *Globe* could hardly be more different from that of the *New Haven Register*. Instead of the hard-driving Jackson directing the newspaper's policy, the man in charge at the *Globe* was Henry J. Wright, a crusading progressive journalist who had earlier served under E. L. Godkin, founder of *The Nation*. Wright had gathered a remarkable team of young writers, many of whom—such as Bruce Bliven, R. L. Duffus, Maxwell Anderson, Katharine Brody, William L. Chenery, J. Pitts Sanborn, Wesley W. Stout, and Alfred W. McCann—would go on to distinguished careers of their own. Wright's policy was to hire the most talented men and women he could find and then let them write anything they chose, so long as they lived up to his exacting standards of accuracy.¹⁵

In such an environment Flynn truly seemed to thrive, and it certainly came as a welcome contrast to his experience in New Haven, where “the City Editor was called on to do the work for which at least half a dozen men are employed on a New York City paper.” For him, the news desk of the *Globe* was “the pleasantest spot in the world.” White and the other editors were soon impressed with Flynn’s aggressive and independent style of reporting.¹⁶ On the negative side they found him something of a zealot, and even perhaps even a bit of a prima donna.¹⁷ Nevertheless, within a few months he was promoted to real estate editor and then to city editor. Finally, in late 1922, he replaced Bruce Bliven as the newspaper’s managing editor.¹⁸

It was during Flynn’s three-year stint on the *Globe* that he developed a keen interest in the study of economics and finance, a field on which much of his subsequent fame would be built. He was first attracted to the subject as real estate editor, when he became suspicious of a company that was calling people at random and telling them they had won a free plot of land. All those called had to do to take possession, the callers said, was to pay a fifty-dollar fee for the transfer of the title. Upon looking more closely into the scheme, Flynn discovered that the land being “given” away was nothing but swamp near the end of Long Island, useless for any sort of development. Not only did he write a series of articles for the *Globe* that exposed this racket, he also testified in a hearing to bring charges against the company.¹⁹

Another issue that caught Flynn's attention during his time as real estate editor at the *Globe* was the housing shortage in postwar New York City. Specifically, he sought to uncover why local builders had failed to construct enough decent low-cost housing for returning veterans. His conclusion was that a conspiracy existed among corrupt labor leaders, vendors of building materials, and subcontractors to fix prices and fake bids, and that moreover they had bribed local public officials to turn a blind eye to their activities. Based in part on Flynn's coverage of the racket, the state legislature launched an investigation of the city's construction industry that eventually produced several arrests.²⁰

The time spent at the *Globe* clearly represents a formative period for Flynn, since it saw the emergence of one of his journalistic tendencies that would remain important throughout his career—that is, his devotion to the exposure of “rackets” or conspiracies, particularly when they involved collusion between private individuals or organizations and government agencies. This would not have been unusual for any journalist of his generation; after all, Flynn came of age politically during the Progressive Era, in which crusading journalists sought to uncover all sorts of plots against the “public interest,” whether in the form of gigantic trusts or corrupt government officials. Later in his career he would become famous for applying this same zeal to the exposure of larger conspiracies, at the level of the federal government and the president himself. Indeed, this proclivity would eventually bring him to support Joe McCarthy’s crusade against communism.

Even though the *Globe* was far from unsuccessful financially—its circulation was roughly 160,000—the newspaper faced serious underlying problems that were apparent from the time Flynn went to work there. The owner of the paper, who had always kept his hands out of its actual operation, died in 1920, and a three-year legal battle among his heirs ensued. Finally the heirs agreed to sell it to Frank A. Munsey, a well-known newspaper and magazine publisher. Munsey, however, had little interest in the crusades of the *Globe*'s editorial staff; he had determined during World War I that the market for newspapers in New York City had become too crowded to turn a decent profit, and he had been buying them up ever since. By 1920 he had merged the *Press*, the *Sun*, and the *Telegram* with his favorite local paper, the *Herald*. Less than a month after acquiring the *Globe*, he added it to the conglomeration as well. Flynn was to be kept on board as managing editor, and he managed to persuade Munsey to keep twenty-two other members of the

staff. But it soon turned out that the new owner expected to be involved in virtually every facet of the paper's operation—including, apparently, editorial policy. Flynn resigned, and although he was at the time president of the New York Press Club, he found himself once again unemployed.²¹

Flynn's position in 1923 was much stronger than it had been three years earlier in New Haven. By this time he had developed a considerable reputation as a writer and was highly regarded within the journalistic community. Even more important was the network he had developed from his time at the *Globe*. Many of the talented writers and editors that Henry J. Wright had assembled embarked on other ventures. Two of these in particular—William L. Chenery and Bruce Bliven—would be of immeasurable assistance as Flynn embarked on a new career, this time as a freelance writer.

His big break came in January 1925, when Chenery became editor of *Collier's* magazine and quickly contracted with Flynn for a series of articles on economic matters. Flynn's first contribution would, in fact, be the cover story of the June 13, 1925 issue—the first in a three-part series on horse racing. Referring to the practice of betting on the horses as “the Great Boob Trap,” he noted that despite the considerable odds against winning any significant amount, Americans were spending twice as much at the track as they were on building homes. All this, he claimed, was the work of a conspiracy of “professional race horse men”:

They take the noblest animal that has ever befriended man and make him the central hero in a very ignoble swindle. . . . They pull the races, rig the odds, peddle false information and collect millions from the poor boobs whom they deluded. And they call this business sport—The Sport of Kings!²²

The three-part exposé of horse racing was just the beginning of what would become a long and mutually profitable relationship between Flynn and *Collier's*. Chenery would later refer to him as one of the best writers the magazine employed, as he possessed “a quite amazing capacity to make economic and financial subjects interesting to a large audience.”²³ Over the next fifteen years he would write between five and eight articles for the magazine each year, on subjects ranging from the financing of presidential election campaigns, to the effects of Prohibition, to the practices of “crooked mediums and bogus phantoms.” In fact, beginning in

1937 he would be listed on the masthead as “associate editor,” although he continued to write for the magazine on a strictly freelance basis.²⁴

It was at about the same time that Flynn was hired as editorial director for the United Publishers Corporation (UPC) News Service, which handled syndication for more than eighty newspapers in the New York City metropolitan area. He also wrote his own column for the syndicate, entitled “Behind the Scenes in the Business World.” When in 1928 the UPC News Service was dissolved, Flynn established his own organization that represented many of the former syndicate’s clients, himself included. He called it the Globe Newspaper Syndicate, no doubt as a tribute to his happy years at the *New York Globe*. Yet by the late 1920s his own writing came to take up an increasingly large portion of his time. He began receiving more freelance jobs, not only for *Collier’s* but for several other national publications, including *Harper’s*, *Forum*, and *American Magazine*. Moreover, he was beginning work on what would become his third book, a biography of John D. Rockefeller. He eventually concluded that distributing the work of others was a distraction from his own career as a writer, and in 1930 he sold off his syndicate.²⁵

Even without the extra responsibility of managing the syndicate, Flynn had already developed a reputation for hard work. According to Richard C. Frey, it was not unusual for him to work seven days a week, reading and writing from early in the morning to late in the evening. He recognized early on that it would be impossible to succeed as a freelance writer unless he adopted a regular schedule and stuck to it. It was during this time that he opened an office in Manhattan, at 15 East Fortieth Street, a block away from the New York Public Library, and hired Rosalie Gordon as his personal secretary. He would keep the office for the next twenty years, and he would maintain a working relationship with Gordon for the rest of his life.²⁶

The articles Flynn wrote in the late 1920s offer considerable insight on the American economy during this period. Like most professional economists of the time, he believed important structural changes were taking place that would bring about higher wages, shorter hours of work, and lower prices. Most important among these changes was the mechanization of industry. Flynn noted that, as a result of a decline in immigration to the United States, the cost of labor had steadily risen to the point that mechanization had become a cheaper alternative to more traditional methods. As a result, “the progressive and driving forces in business have

launched a war upon the pick and shovel and the institution of common labor.”²⁷

Flynn recognized that one of the unfortunate short-term results of this trend would be an increase in unemployment, and to this end he championed the limitation of the work week—by government regulation, if necessary—to five days. Not only would this require firms to hire more employees, he argued, but it would also give workers more time for leisure, which would in turn make them better consumers. Yet at the same time he doubted that unemployment would remain a pressing concern over the long haul, since growing demand would continue to fuel economic expansion. Indeed, he argued that a certain level of unemployment was a necessary function of prosperity, since “factories are prosperous because they have found cheaper forms of power than the arms and backs of common laborers.”²⁸

Above all, Flynn rejected the increasingly popular notion that thanks to mechanization the supply of consumer goods would exceed the public’s demand for them. He labeled those who called for a voluntarily reduction of production “naïve,” fears of overproduction “a murmur from the old order passing.” “When you limit output,” he wrote in 1928, “you stop machines. You silence factories. You throw men out of work.” There was no problem of overproduction, only a problem of underconsumption—and with the growth of modern advertising, soon this problem, too, would be solved.²⁹

Just as important as mechanization for Flynn was the rapid growth of corporate enterprises. In a 1926 article he wrote for *Harper’s*, he claimed that the “old distinction between employer and employee” was beginning to disappear, since even such powerful figures as Elbert Gary of United States Steel were ultimately the hirelings of corporate stockholders. Even the neighborhood store, the traditional domain of the independent proprietor, was coming increasingly under the control of chains. But while this meant that the economy was falling under the control of fewer and fewer organizations—Flynn noted that there were twice as many shoe companies in the 1890s, when the country’s population was half what it was in 1926—stock ownership was at the same time becoming a possibility for a growing percentage of the population.³⁰

All of this, Flynn predicted, would have far-reaching consequences for the American economy. He noted that a common argument against socialism was that it would turn everyone into an employee; but precisely

this was happening, thanks to “the cult of Mass Production.” What he saw evolving was a strange hybrid of socialism and capitalism, in which private property passed “out of the hands of individuals and into the hands of impersonal ownership.” The problem was that, at least in the short term, the system was prone to much abuse, since the management of industrial enterprises would be in the control of fewer and fewer hands. Hence it was easy to point to examples of “exorbitant salaries, padded pay-rolls, nepotism, waste, purchasing graft, and neglect.” But he believed that eventually stockholders would become fed up with such behavior and demand accountability, perhaps through what he called “stockholders’ unions.”³¹

The overall picture that emerges from Flynn’s writings during this period is one of optimism. Mechanization and the rise of huge corporate conglomerates were revolutionizing industry, but this was a revolution to be welcomed, not feared. Of course, these changes would necessarily bring with them the hardship of economic dislocation, but such effects could be ameliorated through timely action on the part of the government. None of this, it should be added, would have seemed terribly odd or radical. It was very much in line with the tradition of respectable middle-class progressivism that had predominated during the era of Theodore Roosevelt.

But like the progressives, Flynn had serious concerns about unfettered capitalism, mainly because he did not trust businessmen to behave ethically. What seemed to worry him most was that the present pro-business climate might dull the senses of stockholders to what was actually going on within the corporations in which they held stock. He noted with some concern that in the late 1920s business was considered “almost a holy thing.” The muckrakers of the Progressive Era had been silenced, and now “the old freebooters have been recalled from the deserts of odium to which they were shipped twenty years ago.” He placed at least part of the blame for this development on public relations, handled by men who “group themselves about the doers, the achievers, the producers, the effective go-getters, and prey upon them” by becoming “the apologists and defenders of their successful patrons.”

They invent philosophies to justify them. They make propaganda. They set up systems of ethics hand-made to fit the current aims of their employers. . . . They produce the speeches, write the articles, compose the autobiographies, and trumpet the deeds of their masters.³²

When one stripped away the “verbal flourishes about God and flag and service” put out by the public relations experts, the fact was that in many businesses ethical practices were “on a very low plane.” Corporate directors and officers looked upon their positions not as trusts in which they were to pursue the interests of stockholders but rather as milk cows to be exploited for personal enrichment.³³

Still worse, from Flynn’s perspective, was when businessmen sought to deal with abuses through “self-regulation.” He considered with horror the efforts of trade associations to impose “codes of conduct” on firms, particularly when they sought the support of governments in enforcing their standards. Such codes, he pointed out, were full of high-minded phrases about “honesty and all the commercial values.” However, the actual provisions tended to involve setting prices and wages, imposing bans on advertising, and preventing firms from trying to lure employees and customers away from one another. In other words, “self-regulation” was merely the means by which a few large firms tried to cheat consumers and prevent competitors from challenging their dominant market positions.³⁴

To prove his point, he offered the example of the Bolt, Nut, and Rivet Manufacturers’ Association, which in 1929 claimed to have overcome the problem of “selfishness” in the industry by establishing regulations that prevented firms from undercutting each other’s prices. Perhaps this might make things easier for the large firms within the industry, but, Flynn pointed out, ultimately the consumer would suffer. “[W]hat about the people who must buy rivets from them?” he asked. “What dividends are they getting in this glorious piece of unselfishness?” Although he made it clear that he was no enemy of major corporations—indeed, he saw them as good for the economy—he referred to the campaign for self-regulation “one of the most disturbing and pernicious trends in modern business.”³⁵

Given his interest in economics and the world of high finance, it is not surprising that he would eventually turn his attention the stock market. Thanks mainly to a combination of low taxes and low interest rates, the market more than tripled between 1925 and 1928, and speculators were borrowing enormous sums of money for the purchase of stocks—which, of course, drove stock prices still higher. In such an environment it seemed as though anyone could become rich. Horatio Alger-like stories abounded of average people buying into the market with modest sums and eventually making millions. Indeed, prominent financiers such as Charles Mitchell of National City Bank frequently spoke of a desire to

market stocks to the public “on a straightforward basis, just as it is served by the United Cigar Stores or Child’s Restaurants.”³⁶

Nevertheless, a handful of skeptics began to warn that the market was becoming dangerously overvalued and predicted that unless something was done to curb speculation, the market was headed for a collapse. One of these Cassandras was Flynn, who as early as 1924 was identifying potential problems with the boom. He was by no means radical in this regard; in his articles on the subject, he repeatedly emphasized that the stock exchange was a “useful and necessary” feature of the capitalist system. However, as with big business in general, Wall Street was subject to certain abuses that resulted from unethical behavior on the part of the individuals involved. In an editorial for the *New York Times*, Flynn pointed to the growing importance of investment trusts, in which investors—mainly small investors—placed their money at the disposal of professional managers who would purchase common stock in certain corporations.³⁷

Investment trusts had their advantages, as Flynn was quick to point out—they gave even ordinary people a means of getting in on some of the hottest-selling stocks of the time. However, these trusts could be extremely dangerous; he warned that “the broker with a thirst for quick riches” could easily use them to his own benefit. He noted that while brokers presented themselves as honest middlemen, with only the interest of the investor in mind, many were also in the business of selling corporate securities and would not hesitate to use the trusts as a means of propping up the price of underperforming stocks.³⁸

Beginning in 1928, the market took off on its wildest ride yet, nearly doubling in value in the course of a year. At this point Flynn noted another potential problem, this time involving technology. Stock trading was taking place in volumes heavier than ever before, and the stock tickers in use at the time were becoming less and less able to keep up. Flynn claimed that the ticker was “at the end of its rope” and feared that this could have serious consequences. If the price changes indicated on ticker-tape machines were not current, but rather reflected the state of the market several hours, or even possibly days, previous, investors would be likely to make costly mistakes. Rather than risk this, Flynn suggested, investors might simply choose to bail out of the market at some opportune moment.³⁹

The continuing rise in the market during the first months of 1929 suggests that few took Flynn’s warnings to heart. In February he complained

about corporate directors and officers using stockholder money to buy stocks and called for government regulation to prevent it. Furthermore, he predicted that stock prices were so inflated that unless there were “an early public examination of the whole system,” a crash was inevitable. This crash, he claimed, would be huge, since investors would by this time be receiving via their tickers stock information that was already out of date. What would begin as a minor sell-off would rapidly escalate into a major disaster—at least 10 million shares would be dumped, Flynn estimated.⁴⁰

Another six months passed, and in spite of such warnings the Great Bull Market continued to surge upward; nevertheless, Flynn continued to preach that disaster was just around the corner. In August he again warned that Wall Street was beset with “grave abuses,” namely, the evil of speculation, which he believed to be no better than simple gambling. For anyone who still insisted on speculating in corporate securities, Flynn had these words: “You will be rich on some days, but I cannot assure you that you will be rich every day. I can reasonably assure you that you will die poor.”⁴¹

Less than three months later, the stock market crash that Flynn had been predicting for nearly a year finally came to pass. On October 24 nearly 13 million shares of stock were dumped on the market. A few days of modest recovery followed, but on October 29—“Black Tuesday”—over 16 million more shares were sold. On that day, just as Flynn had warned, the ticker was running hours behind schedule; the final results were not reported until late into the evening. The disaster had been even greater than he had anticipated, and thousands of investors were utterly ruined.

Although the effects of the crash were cataclysmic, no one realized that the country was about to enter the worst economic crisis of its history. The next several years would see the closing of thousands of banks, a dramatic drop in national income, a massive surge in unemployment (in 1933, the jobless rate would exceed 25 percent, and it would remain in double digits until 1940), and untold misery for millions of Americans. However, this same period would bring John T. Flynn to national attention. He was hardly the only person to predict the Great Crash, nor had his analysis been the most original or insightful; for example, he paid but scant attention to the Federal Reserve, whose “easy money” policies contributed heavily to the collapse. However, nearly all the other skeptics were either financiers or academic economists, and they aimed their

warnings to those within these professions. By contrast, by contributing to popular magazines such as *Harper's*, *Collier's*, and *American Magazine*, Flynn managed to communicate his prophecies to a popular audience, in language that the average educated person could understand. This accomplishment would set him on the road to being one of the most sought-after commentators on economics and finance of the 1930s.

Business Must Be Governed

By the end of 1929, John Flynn was becoming a recognized authority on economic and financial matters. During the next three years his words appeared in a wide variety of publications, most notably the *New Republic*. Bruce Bliven, his old colleague from the *Globe*, replaced Herbert Croly as editor of that journal in 1930, and he almost immediately began including articles by Flynn. It was also during this time that Flynn began receiving invitations to speak at public events. He was even asked to give a series of ten-minute talks on finance on New York radio station WEVD—the beginning of a long and fruitful association with radio broadcasting.¹

The reason why Flynn's fame increased over these years was simple—he was grappling with questions that were on the minds of millions of Americans. Since he had been one of the few to predict the Wall Street crash, people were quite naturally willing to listen to his explanation of the causes for the Great Depression, as well as his prescriptions for how to end it. The answers he would give to these questions illustrate the extent to which he continued to be influenced by middle-class progressivism. They also hint at a growing sense of disillusionment, not with the capitalist system per se but rather with the ability of ordinary Americans to maintain it.

Like most economists in 1929, Flynn seemed to have little sense of the magnitude of the crisis. When the economy failed to bounce back in the months after the Wall Street crash, he wrote that it had been the result of an “extraordinary psychological slump,” which he called “the most amazing phenomenon in business history.” His proposal for recovery was therefore quite simple, and not unlike what other economists—not to mention the Hoover administration—were suggesting: the American people had to toss aside their “psychological grumps” and start consuming. Merchants had to do their part by resuming their advertising campaigns,

which many had given up on. Above all, there had to be an end to “all the depression propaganda,” which was frightening people out of spending money.²

Even a year after the crash, Flynn was continuing to sound optimistic that recovery was close at hand. He pointed out that relatively few people had defaulted on installment payments. While he admitted that unemployment was high, he noted that fewer than 1.5 million more people were out of work than had been in 1928. True, national savings had declined by \$200 million, but this was but a drop in the bucket compared to the \$2.5 billion increase in savings that had occurred during the previous year. A number of corporations had even reported greater earnings in 1930 than they had in 1929. In short, the depression was not such a bad thing; as a matter of fact, it might even be useful in teaching Americans some important lessons about how the economy functioned.³

This is not to say that Flynn agreed with most orthodox economists or, indeed, Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon, who advocated letting the economy bottom out on its own. While Flynn ultimately believed (as they did) that depressions were a natural and inevitable product of the business cycle, he also believed that the federal government could take steps “to smooth out as far as possible the bumps.” He claimed that thanks to mechanization the “work of the country can be done in ten months instead of twelve—perhaps less.” To keep factories running at full capacity for entire year accomplished nothing except to produce more than was needed, and hence to drive prices down. Better, he believed, to close them for at least two months out of the year, while continuing to pay workers the same salaries.⁴

For Flynn, the reasons for the depression did not stem primarily from the structure of the economy. Indeed, he praised the system for the amount of mobility it provided. For example, he disputed the notion that modern capitalism was creating an “industrial autocracy.” He pointed out that “few of our fortunes are more than a single generation, fewer still can boast of two generations and three- or four-generation money dynasties can be counted on the fingers of our hands.” None of the great business leaders of the time, he noted, were descendants of the great industrialists of the past. The reason for this, he claimed, was the corporation. Most industrialists sought to avoid the risk of liability involved with private ownership of a large firm, so instead they offered shares on the market and held on to only a minority of the stock. The result was a democratization of economic power that was unprecedented.⁵

Flynn instead believed that the problems in the economy grew out of unethical practices engaged in by many business leaders. During the early 1930s, he wrote a whole series of exposés of such instances, targeting such individuals as Ivar Krueger of the International Match Company (“one of the greatest of international crooks”), Hetty Green (“the witch of Wall Street”), and, above all, Samuel Insull, whose utility empire had in the 1920s dominated the provision of electrical power in the Midwest. In a four-part series for *Collier’s*, Flynn wrote that Insull had “wrecked a vast financial fabric,” destroying the life savings of thousands and delivering “a staggering blow to the stability of business credit at a most critical moment.” He accused the utility tycoon of possessing a “madness for power and profit” and claimed that he had been even more dangerous than Al Capone. “Some day a more civilized people will not permit such things,” he concluded. “Right now the law not only permits them but actually encourages them.”⁶

Flynn dealt directly with the issue of corrupt business practices in a three-part series for the *New Republic*, whose editor was by this time Bruce Bliven, Flynn’s old friend from the *Globe*. This series, entitled “Graft in Business,” proved extremely popular among the magazine’s readership, so much so that it appeared before the end of the year as a book published by the left-wing Vanguard Press.⁷

In “Graft in Business,” Flynn said that corruption in government was minimal compared with that which went on constantly in the corporate world, mainly because business activities were conducted largely without publicity. He praised the old muckrakers for bringing about “a revival of morals” and specifically for helping to create such government agencies as the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Food and Drug Administration, but claimed that they had gone too far in denouncing all businessmen as villains. In the 1920s, however, the pendulum had swung too far in the other direction; thanks to the work of public relations specialists, there was an “incessant fawning and laudation of business and business men.”⁸

Flynn suggested that part of the reason for this might be that businessmen were basing their ethics on the Old Testament rather than the New. After being raised hearing stories such as “Jacob’s goat trick on Laban, or Joseph’s grain corner, or Moses’ big jewelry loan in Egypt,” it was no wonder that the average businessman’s attitude was that “if these great prophets could get away with it, why could not he?” But the basic problem, Flynn argued, was that managers were behaving as though they

were private owners. They had yet to recognize that the new economy was corporate, and that they were merely servants of the stockholders. Therefore they engaged in all manner of practices aimed at enriching themselves—using stockholders' money to speculate on the stock market, organizing holding companies through which to expand recklessly, and dumping worthless securities on the market.⁹

Yet throughout *Graft in Business*, Flynn went out of his way to show that he was a defender of big business. His words should be looked upon not as “an assault by a foe” but rather as “the warning of a friend.” He called graft “a parasitic growth which devours the substance of business,” far more of a threat than “the agitation of so-called radical groups” or “the more or less vague menace of Russia.”

I take the capitalistic system as I find it, assume it is the soundest, assume at least, with some reason, that it will be with us some little time; certainly is with us now and must be lived with for a space. That being so, there is no reason why the inequities in the rewards of work should not be corrected if that is possible.¹⁰

A prime example of the sort of unethical behavior that Flynn deplored was speculation on the stock market. He was quick to distinguish the legitimate investor—whom he defined as the man who buys a certain stock because “he has faith in the future possibilities of growth of that enterprise”—from the speculator, who had no particular interest in the enterprise yet purchased stock, solely with the intention of selling it for a profit within a few weeks or months. As he wrote to the editor of *Harper's*, Frederick L. Allen, speculators engaged in “essentially a gambling operation.” As a Catholic, Flynn noted, he had no moral objection to gambling as such, provided that it conformed to four conditions—it must not cause injury to third parties; it must be free of fraud; it must be engaged in out of free will; and there must be equality on the part of all participants. Unfortunately, given the conditions of the stock market at the time, speculation lived up to none of those conditions. Since it drew credit away from productive business such as construction, it hurt the rest of the economy. (Flynn compared this to the gambler who risks his family's life savings.) It was laden with fraud, as firms deliberately withheld information that might help investors make wise decisions regarding how a stock was likely to perform. Not everyone participated voluntarily, since legitimate investors became unwilling participants as speculation altered the value

of their securities. Finally, there was no equality among participants, since experienced Wall Street traders with inside information clearly had an advantage over ordinary investors.¹¹

The Wall Street crash, Flynn claimed, revealed a very important fact about the business community. Everyone knew that the market was over-inflated. Nevertheless, “everyone kept puffing away at it.” Too many people were getting rich from the Great Bull Market for anyone to try to stop it. Business, in short, failed utterly to regulate itself. He therefore called for a federal investigation of the securities trade, although he was adamant that such an investigation should not be conducted by Congress. Politicians were too uninformed about such matters and had a tendency to play to the crowd in expectation of the next election. Such an investigation, under Congress, would rapidly degenerate into a circus, “with the foes of the exchanges hurling abuse at them while their apologists indulged in sneering replies.” Instead, the study should be entrusted to an independent commission of experts—“several economists, several financiers, members who are familiar with the processes of production, manufacture, and distribution, and a statesman or two.” It should carry on its work privately, lest its members be tempted to put on a show for the press. Most important, it should employ “the methods of the student and thinker rather than those of the politician and publicity seeker.”¹²

Flynn also sharpened his focus on investment trusts, which he had identified as a potential problem as early as the mid-1920s. While he made it clear that he did not reject the idea behind these trusts—indeed, he claimed it was “the wisest instrument for investment yet devised” and had the potential to evolve “into a useful and profitable system for popular participation in the fruits of industry”—he cited their fate as a prime example of how fundamentally sound institutions had been corrupted by unethical individuals. Like the corporate executives who had forgotten that they were employees of the stockholders, investment trust managers were using the public’s investments to build their own financial empires. Through the use of holding companies, they managed to extend their control over multiple corporations with a minimal amount of capital. Moreover, they would distinguish between regular and “preferred” stock in the trust; the majority of the latter—which came with actual voting rights—they would hold on to themselves, while selling only the former to the general public. As a result, these trust managers were able to exercise an amount of control over the trust that was out of all proportion to the shares they actually owned.¹³

Flynn raised another important issue with regard to the investment trusts: Why, in almost every case, did their managers fail to predict the stock market crash? He noted that these managers earned huge commissions but had proved so incompetent that they were oblivious to the inflated price of stocks in the late 1920s. The other alternative was even worse—they knew that a crash was coming but had deliberately continued to put their own personal greed before the welfare of those who had entrusted their savings to them.¹⁴

Here again, Flynn recommended a federal investigation, although he recognized that many people feared such an investigation might contribute to “the prevailing nervousness of the business world.” He turned aside the notion that the handling of the trusts was a matter strictly between stockholders and managers, arguing that the nation’s credit “in a general way belongs to the public.” He likened it to a public utility in that it was something that “the public must have, cannot indeed get along without, any more than it can get along without fuel or light or bread.” Investment bankers, therefore, performed “a quasi-public function” and so must be subject to public scrutiny.¹⁵

Yet Flynn did not focus exclusively on securities trading in his diagnosis of the depression. Indeed, he confided to a friend that he did not really believe there was a causal connection between the stock market crash and the nation’s economic woes. While he blamed the “gambling orgy in Wall Street” for hastening its arrival, he claimed that one had to look to certain “fundamental economic factors” to understand why the economy was not recovering.¹⁶

Chief among these factors, Flynn believed, was the existence of “chain banking,” or “group banking.” He noted that in the Progressive Era there were frequent denunciations of “the Money Devil”—that is, gigantic banks that devoured smaller ones. This had led twenty-seven states to pass legislation either banning branch banking (in which individual banks were simply outlets for a single massive institution) or limiting its expansion. But, he lamented, while the decline in branch banking had silenced those who had denounced it, an even more insidious practice had replaced it. There were roughly thirty thousand banks in operation in 1929, each bearing its own name, with its own officers and board of directors. Yet, although such banks could claim to be independent in name, the reality was quite different, as many of them were under the domination of larger holding companies, some of which controlled thousands of seemingly “independent” banks. Flynn concluded that this phenomenon

was “the most serious and far-reaching problem” concerning banking “since the historic fight of Andrew Jackson against the Bank of the United States.” As local ownership of banks disappeared in favor of ownership by holding companies, the banks themselves were becoming less and less subject to the restraining influences of local public opinion, thereby tempting those who ran them to engage in unsound practices.¹⁷

Having identified abuses in the system, Flynn offered some suggestions for correcting them. One of his prescriptions was simply to make it easier for the public to learn about corporate corruption, and in this regard he found the press severely lacking. Strictly speaking, he claimed, modern newspapers did not concern themselves with “news” at all, but rather with “ballyhoo”—that is, publicity. No doubt recalling his happy years at the *Globe*, he accused the press of catering only to the interests of advertisers, which were generally large corporations. They had lost the old spirit of the muckrakers and had no desire to expose corruption in the business world. The solution, he believed, was the establishment of an “ad-less newspaper,” a national weekly that would stick to objective reporting. Such a paper would be “not a carping critic of everything, not a political journal,” but rather “a simple, interesting, honest-minded reporter of all that is taking place in our public affairs, civil and industrial, done in the best newspaper style, but limited to the reporting of facts, facts, facts.” A paper such as this, he argued, would give the reader “a chance to be an intelligent purchaser rather than a blind dupe, who, through a conspiracy between those who sell to him and those whose business is to keep him informed, is kept in darkness about all that he buys.”¹⁸

However, Flynn believed that it would take more than private action to rectify all the problems of the economy. Some could be solved only through government action; surely, he argued, the example of the previous ten years suggested that the business community would never correct them on its own. “Business must be governed . . . must be directed,” he wrote in 1930. “Certainly it will do nothing until some power in the government invites them to action—or drives them to it.” Those who complained about government “interference” in business should recognize that the corporation was precisely an example of such interference. After all, what was a corporation except a group that government chose to endow with some of the same rights that nature granted to individuals?¹⁹

Moreover, to be effective, this direction had to come primarily from the federal government. State laws were insufficient, since corporations

could evade them by simply moving out of states that tried to regulate their activities. He cited the recent history of New Jersey to justify his claim; it had once had the least restrictive incorporation laws in the country and so had attracted such corporate titans as Standard Oil. However, once Woodrow Wilson became governor and began enacting stricter regulations, many of the corporations had fled to neighboring Delaware. That state, he pointed out, had chartered more than one hundred thousand corporations in the past twenty years.²⁰

Flynn believed that the best way to get rid of business abuses was the creation of a body of federal laws that had to be followed by any firm that chose to incorporate. Most of these laws would place more power in the hands of stockholders, whom he believed would exercise a restraining influence on corporate boards and executive officers. He proposed banning holding companies altogether and prohibiting any corporation from owning stock in any other, on the theory that this complicated what should be a simple relationship between individual stockholders and the corporations in which they invested.²¹

However, for stockholders to play such a role, they would need better information on which to base their decisions. Flynn professed to be shocked by how little the average stockholder knew about the corporations in which he invested; most, he claimed, could not identify the corporations' presidents and had no idea of what their earnings were. He therefore demanded that corporations be required to end the secrecy under which they usually operated. The public, Flynn argued, should be aware of the stockholdings of any individual who served on any board of directors, or as an executive officer, for any corporation in the country. This, he predicted, would bring an end to the conflicts of interest that had long plagued corporate activity. Stockholders, meanwhile, would have full access to the salaries that were paid to all officials and directors, since in too many cases "wholly unwarranted sums" were going to "men who contribute but little if anything either in brains or capital to its management."²²

Most of the reforms Flynn advocated between 1929 and 1932 were regulatory in nature, but there was one that did not fit that mold. He had worried about unemployment even during the boom period of the late 1920s; by 1931 the problem had reached crisis proportions, as the jobless rate approached 16 percent. To deal with this, Flynn proposed a system of national unemployment insurance—what he called the "security wage." Under his plan, employers would be required to deposit a small

percentage of what they paid their workers into an account that would be maintained by the federal government. The money in this account would then be used to pay benefits to workers during brief periods of idleness. He also suggested that it might serve as an old-age pension, thus encouraging elderly workers to retire, making room for new hires.²³

Whatever his own recommendations for recovery were, it is clear that he quickly found the efforts of President Herbert Hoover to be wholly insufficient. This was perhaps inevitable, given that Flynn made no secret of the fact that he was, during this time, a partisan Democrat who had voted for Al Smith in 1928. But, at least at first, he was willing to give the president the benefit of the doubt. In early 1930 he praised Hoover for boldness, claiming that he had “put his finger on the germs of instability early in their period of incubation, and he initiated measures of control before the disturbing factors had become wholly unmanageable.”²⁴

However, before the year was out Flynn had reached the conclusion that Hoover’s approach was completely wrongheaded. The president had responded to the crisis by calling a series of meetings involving leading businessmen, in which he exacted promises from them not to cut wages, lay off employees, reduce prices, or lower production. Not only did Flynn find such promises worthless—indeed, most of them had been broken by 1931—but he insisted that Hoover was talking to the wrong people. America’s captains of industry were, he wrote, as “ignorant” as Hoover himself was; it had been their corruption and lack of foresight that had brought on the crisis in the first place. Rather than meeting with them, the president should have consulted “economists and sociologists”—in other words, social scientists motivated not by self-interest but by a professional commitment to public service.²⁵

Hoover’s boldest initiative in his campaign to revive the economy was the creation of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) in January 1932. The corporation was a government-run entity, funded with \$2 billion in public money and authorized to make emergency loans to rescue banks, credit unions, insurance companies, and other financial institutions. The idea behind it was that if such entities could be prevented from collapsing, they would eventually lead the rest of the economy back on the road to recovery.

Flynn was suspicious of the RFC from the start. As he wrote to Frederick L. Allen, the idea did not originally come from Hoover but from New York bankers looking for a bailout. He noted that they had earlier proposed a similar scheme but that the president had “objected violently

to it,” telling them on no uncertain terms that “this was a job which the bankers themselves ought to undertake.” Part of the problem for Flynn was the RFC’s secrecy; Hoover, along with the corporation’s director, Eugene Meyer, refused to tell the public, or even Congress, which institutions had received loans, for fear that depositors might lose confidence in them and rush to withdraw their money. Flynn suspected that behind the wall of secrecy the same sort of corruption would occur that took place in the business world at large.²⁶

Flynn conducted a thorough investigation of the corporation’s lending practices throughout 1932 before publishing an exposé entitled “Inside the R.F.C.: An Adventure in Secrecy” in the January 1933 issue of *Harper’s*. In five months, he claimed, the corporation had spent hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money without ever identifying the recipients of this relief. The administration claimed that most of the loans were going to small banks. This was true, wrote Flynn, but also irrelevant, since these loans tended to be minuscule. Over half of the money spent by the RFC, he pointed out, went to only three banks—all of which had political ties to the administration. For example, he charged that Secretary of Commerce Roy Chapin, formerly head of the Detroit-based Hudson Motor Company, had arranged for vast amounts to be placed at the disposal of Michigan’s largest bank.²⁷

Aside from the matter of secrecy and the suggestion of government favoritism, Flynn believed that the RFC would do nothing to correct the basic problems he had identified in corporate America. Far from preventing graft and corruption in business, government loans would sanction them. “How many of these big banks,” he asked, “were holding-company controlled or were using the dangerous investment and security affiliate practice? Almost all of them.” He noted that of the \$264 million loaned to the railroads, well over half went to those owned by the Morgans and the Van Swerigens, both of whom used shady holding-company tactics to build vast empires. It would have been far better had the administration put the money into housing construction; the same \$50 million that went toward bailing out the Van Swerigens’ railroads could have “built nearly 20,000 dwelling units and directly and indirectly put 60,000 men to work.”²⁸

Such criticism leads one to wonder how Flynn’s political ideology at the time might be categorized. It was, after all, during this time that he developed a reputation as a liberal, if not a leftist. Certainly, many of his

early speaking opportunities came from left-wing sources. In 1932 he was invited to give a series of lectures on “The Economics of Speculation” at Camp Tamiment, an adult summer camp in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. The talks were to be part of a program put on by the Rand School of Social Science, an organ of the Socialist Party. He was also an associate editor and frequent contributor to *Common Sense*, a magazine affiliated with John Dewey’s League for Independent Political Action. Moreover, radio station WEVD, which carried his first series of radio addresses, billed itself as “The Debs Memorial Station,” after the late socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs. The chairman of the station’s advisory board was the well-known socialist journalist Heywood Broun, and its literature claimed that it was committed to the idea “that a new and better system must replace the present chaos.”²⁹

Perhaps, given Flynn’s criticism of Hoover and his tendency to blame corporate executives and Wall Street bankers for the economic crisis, this association was inevitable. However, it tends to obscure the fact that his views were generally quite moderate. Indeed, of his specific recommendations for bringing about recovery, only his proposal to ban holding companies was in any way radical; even his call for a “security wage” was something that many mainstream thinkers were proposing in 1931. In advancing such measures, he argued that one of their great benefits would be that they would turn the working class into one of the most conservative groups in society.³⁰

At a more basic level, Flynn had little in common with those who, like the directors of WEVD, sought to replace capitalism with “a new and better system.” In both his published works and his private letters he indicated his preference not only for the private enterprise system but for big business as well. Thanks to the existence of major corporations, he argued, there was far more order in the economy than there had been in the chaotic era of the small producer. Nor did the problem lie, as some believed, in mechanization; he mocked those who, like the economist Stuart Chase, possessed what Flynn called “a horror of the machine.” “The machine,” he wrote in 1933, “displaces men, but it displaces them from work which men ought not to be called on to do.”³¹

The problem, Flynn claimed, lay not so much in the system itself but in ethical failings on the part of individuals such as J. P. Morgan, Samuel Insull, and the Van Swerigen brothers. The system itself was to blame only insofar as it allowed for an unhealthy wall of secrecy behind which

such practices were allowed to continue unchecked. He put it best in a letter to Jason Westerfield, a member of the New York Stock Exchange, in January 1930:

I very seldom deliver any strictures on big business as I am a profound believer in it. Once in a while I think a few big business men—who must not always be confused with big business—need a little touch of the stick. Some of the saints, you know, used to flagellate themselves. I am sure big business men will not shrink from a practice which was good for the souls of the saints.³²

In fact, Flynn even raised concerns during this part of his career that government intervention might be more likely to hinder recovery than promote it. In particular, he objected to the efforts of those (including many liberal Democrats) who sought to strengthen the country's anti-trust laws. "Monopoly," the bogeyman of the populists of the 1890s, was no longer a problem, he claimed. Corporations might be larger than ever, but the competition between them remained fierce.³³

Flynn, in short, did not believe in what Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis called "the curse of bigness." The rise of major corporations meant that more products were available than ever before, at prices that more people could afford. In terms of production, there was nothing wrong; however, the distribution side lagged behind. He compared the U.S. economy to a water system that had "a magnificent new reservoir" but was stuck with "small, rusty, and defective pipes." Unfortunately, small shop owners, acting through their trade associations, were trying to block the development of the one force that could remedy this—the chain store. In a four-part series for the *New Republic*, he chided the independent shopkeeper for believing that "some sort of natural law is invaded when his existence is threatened by the chain store or any other institution." Retail chains, Flynn insisted, were successful because they provided better products at lower prices, and thus any attempt to limit their growth was harmful to consumers—and would therefore hinder rather than promote economic recovery.³⁴

Flynn's views on the economy would come through most clearly in *God's Gold: The Story of Rockefeller and His Times*, which was published in 1932. Although it was his third book, the first two (*Investment Trusts Gone Wrong* and *Graft in Business*) had been mainly compilations of series he had written for the *New Republic*. *God's Gold*, by contrast,

was a full-length biography, which Flynn had been working on since the late 1920s. While it was by no means an uncritical account, Flynn made no effort to hide his admiration for Rockefeller, “a man who, by his complete conquest over himself, has exhibited the capacities of the human mind for achievement.”³⁵

Flynn began his story by repeating the standard account of the so-called robber barons of the nineteenth century. “The chronicles of American fortune building are not very noble ones,” he wrote. Many of the earliest millionaires got rich through corrupt land grants; most of the later fortunes were made “through downright frauds or stock-jobbing operations closely bordering upon fraud.” But he then went on to argue that Rockefeller did not fit into that category. Of all the great fortunes of his day, Flynn claimed, his was “the least tainted.” Indeed, he compared Rockefeller to “a large, powerful, intelligent lion” in the midst of “a whole race of mice.” While the mice ran about in circles, disordered and disorganized, the lion, through sheer force of will, brought order out of chaos.³⁶ As Flynn put it in a radio interview,

Rockefeller made his money out of a legitimate productive business—manufacturing oil and selling it at a profit. Most of the other great fortunes of his time were made out of stock manipulation. . . . Rockefeller never swindled his stockholders, his associates, his customers or his investing public. He was a producer and a merchant and never a gambler.³⁷

God's Gold was acclaimed in numerous reviews, but the one that Flynn appreciated the most came from John Chamberlain, book review editor for the *New York Times*. He called the book “complete, admirably documented and wholly sane,” and while he suggested that the style of writing was “sometimes woolly,” overall it was “a masterpiece of organization.”³⁸

The book also brought Flynn’s name to the attention of several of the leading literary figures of the day, helping to cement his reputation as an expert on economic and financial affairs. Harry Elmer Barnes, then a renowned sociologist at the New School for Social Research, sent him a note of congratulations, marking the beginning of a correspondence between them that would continue for the next twenty-five years. Frederick L. Allen of *Harper's* called *God's Gold* “a fine piece of work—thorough, understanding, fair-minded, and graphic.” The noted biographer

Matthew Josephson wrote to tell him how helpful it was to him in his work on what would become his next book, *The Robber Barons*. Finally, no less a personage than H. L. Mencken called it “a really first-rate job” and invited Flynn to contribute an article to his iconoclastic journal *The American Mercury*. Flynn’s star was still on the rise; still greater acclaim was to come.³⁹

An Empty Collection of Syllables

In the 1940s, John T. Flynn would be best known for his strident criticisms of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. Bruce Bliven, his boss first at the *New York Globe* and later at the *New Republic*, would refer to his “extraordinary monomania of hatred” toward the thirty-second president.¹ Flynn would dedicate two books—*Country Squire in the White House* (1940) and *The Roosevelt Myth* (1948)—to demonstrating that the president was an intellectual lightweight, a dilettante, and a warmonger who was surrounded by advisers bent on destroying the American republic. Indeed, it would be his views on Roosevelt that would alter his reputation from that of a liberal to a reactionary—although the extent to which his opinions actually changed is a subject of debate.

Yet Flynn was not always a critic of Roosevelt. As a partisan Democrat and an advocate of middle-class progressivism, he was inclined from the start to support Roosevelt when he ran against Herbert Hoover for the presidency in 1932. Years later, near the end of his career, he would insist that he had been attracted to Roosevelt’s promises to reduce spending and balance the budget—as if he were running as a supporter of laissez-faire capitalism. There are grounds for considerable skepticism about this claim. Based on his writings at the time, Flynn truly seemed to view Roosevelt as a reformer who would do whatever was necessary to promote recovery.²

At the very least, it was clear that Flynn would not endorse Hoover, whom he had taken to calling the “eminent witch doctor.” As he wrote in *Forum*, Hoover had spent his presidency trying not so much to end the Depression as to protect the corrupt practices that had brought it about; he compared the president to “a health officer in a plague epidemic who fights, not to end the plague, but to save the rats.” He predicted that if Hoover were given another term, “holding companies, bank affiliates,

speculation, stock racketeering, and price fixing will continue to flourish.” While Roosevelt promised to eliminate such abuses, “Hoover does not think them abuses.” Flynn therefore viewed the approach of Election Day with glee, less perhaps out of enthusiasm for Roosevelt than from enmity toward the incumbent. As he wrote on the day before the polls opened, he could hardly wait to “smite the great Miracle Man.”³

Perhaps the most accurate reflection of Flynn’s attitude toward Roosevelt in 1932 comes from a diary entry he wrote in January 1940—that is, well after he had become a critic of the president but before he had become a hero to the Far Right. At that time he claimed that even then he “had no illusions” about the Democratic candidate. “I knew he was a man of limited intellectual equipment, not in any sense a thinker.” However, “I believed him to be a liberal, that all his impulses were in that direction and that, between Hoover the arch conservative and the liberal Roosevelt there could be no choice.”⁴

Flynn therefore welcomed Roosevelt’s landslide victory, and in the months between Election Day and the inauguration, he took the liberty of offering the president-elect some free advice. He pointed out that the Republican administrations of the 1920s had been packed with millionaires—Herbert Hoover, Andrew Mellon, Henry Stimson, Ogden Mills, Charles Francis Adams, Patrick Hurley, William R. Castle, and Charles Dawes, just to name a few. This, he claimed, helped to explain why Hoover’s natural approach to economic “reconstruction” was to give \$250 million to favored banks through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. The best thing that Roosevelt could do would be to “sweep the public service clean of these millionaire guardians of the private interests. Why not try, just as an experiment, some plain, educated, honest men, whose success has been in other fields than the amassing of money?”⁵

Flynn saw considerable promise in the early weeks of Roosevelt’s presidency, calling the results of the election nothing less than another American Revolution. He noted that there had been in the weeks after the inauguration “an amazing change . . . in the minds of the American people,” that for the first time in years there was “a sort of confidence that . . . action will be taken.” He rejoiced that so many of the icons of the 1920s—men such as Mellon, Mills, Calvin Coolidge, Samuel Insull, and Ivar Krueger—were either dead or had (like Insull) fled the country. He was, moreover, gratified that “laissez-faire and its twin dogma, individualism” had been largely discredited, paving the way for healthier attitudes regarding government and society.⁶

Yet Flynn recognized that it would take more than “singing ‘Happy Days Are Here Again’ [the theme song of the Roosevelt campaign]” to bring about recovery. The old system might have been torn down, but there was not as yet anything firm to replace it. There were plenty of panaceas being talked about— inflation of the money supply through the monetarization of silver, massive deficit spending, the thirty-hour work week, and the like—all of which Flynn rejected. They were, he wrote, “no more than means to get us out of the hold we are in at the moment” and would “not even remotely touch the problem of keeping us out of another one.” But there was one course that Flynn sought specifically to warn the new president against. While he claimed to favor some form of national economic planning, this should be the work of experts trained in the social sciences. Roosevelt must under no circumstances give businessmen the authority to regulate their own industries. This, he claimed was “the old scheme of the Chamber of Commerce,” which even Coolidge and Hoover had resisted. At its heart, he wrote, this would take the country down a path that had already been blazed by Benito Mussolini in Italy: “Guild Fascism.”⁷

This extended discussion of Flynn’s advice to Roosevelt is useful in gauging the state of his economic thought in early 1933. More important, however, it helps to explain why Flynn would become such a vehement critic of the New Deal. Flynn would eventually build a career on attacking Roosevelt with a fervor that made his criticisms of Hoover pale by comparison. This attitude was rooted in a deep sense of disappointment, for while there was no single issue that turned Flynn definitively against the New Deal, by the middle of the 1930s he would conclude that the president had taken every bit of advice he had offered and done the complete opposite.

Flynn had some reason for believing that his recommendations would be taken seriously, for his words were clearly being appreciated within what might be called the liberal community. More and more periodicals were beginning to carry articles by him, and he began writing a weekly column entitled “Plain Economics” for the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain. His work was also increasingly moving beyond that of writing and publishing; during this time, he began giving half-hour radio addresses for the League for Industrial Democracy as well. Finally, in early 1934, he embarked on his first nationwide speaking tour.⁸

Most important, however, was the development of an ever-closer relationship to the *New Republic*. In early 1933, Flynn met with Bruce Bliven

and expressed his outrage over the way crooked investment bankers had swindled those who had purchased securities since the late 1920s. Bliven at that point asked Flynn to contribute a weekly column on financial and economic affairs, and the latter readily agreed. The first column ran in the March 22 issue; it would continue to run until November 1940. Bliven later recalled that everything Flynn wrote was “loaded with dynamite. . . . Flynn was a crusader, and while his instincts were sound, he was not always careful with his facts; checking what he said before it was printed became a major headache for me.”⁹

Malcolm Cowley, the magazine’s literary editor, suggested that the column bear the title “Other People’s Money,” after the influential book of the same name by Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis. The choice of titles brought Flynn into contact with Felix Frankfurter, a Harvard Law School professor who was Brandeis’s protégé and who had for years been one of Roosevelt’s most influential advisers. Frankfurter expressed his admiration for Flynn’s work, suggesting that the title was “absolutely the glove for that hand—it fits it completely.” Flynn was also pleased, informing Frankfurter that he had kept *Other People’s Money* “close to me for a good many years,” and that “it ought to be read by every young man and woman in America.”¹⁰

The weekly appearance of “Other People’s Money” meant that Flynn now had one more forum in which to take aim at his favorite targets, and chief among these in 1933 were Wall Street speculators. By this time he had become convinced that although the stock exchange was necessary to the functioning of the economy, it was not to be trusted until serious reforms had been made in the way it operated. In the meantime, he warned colleagues and readers alike to stay away from it. When fellow journalist Drew Pearson asked him for investing advice, he told him not to “let anybody talk you into an investment of any kind.” Instead, Pearson should open accounts in banks “which have no connection with any other kind of institution.” Ordinary investors, Flynn claimed, lacked the sort of information that they needed to make wise decisions. He warned the readers of *Red Book* in September that if they chose to play the stock market, “you will not be able to see half your own cards. Your opponents will furnish the deck, do all the dealing, will know their cards and yours. And you will be playing, not for a cent, but for the savings of a life time.”¹¹

But Flynn was not primarily driven to criticize the stock exchange for the sake of average investors, as long as they were properly informed about the risks. As he wrote in *Harper’s*, he had no interest in protecting

“foolish people . . . against the consequences of their own folly.” The real problem was that speculation had turned corporations away from their main tasks—the provision of goods and services to consumers—and converted them into “manufactories of stocks and instruments for stock market profits.” Many firms no longer seemed interested in producing anything of value, only in issuing stocks that would quickly become overvalued. Moreover, in their haste to make loans to speculators, banks were losing their traditional role as a source of “the working capital of the community,” providing funds for new construction, the purchase of new equipment, and the hiring of new employees. They had, rather, turned into “gigantic stomachs to hold and digest the gargantuan meals of stocks and bonds served from the security kitchens of the system.”¹²

Indeed, the state of the nation’s banking system was a subject that was very much on the minds of Americans in early 1933. Years of making questionable loans for the purpose of stock market speculation meant that the crash of 1929 had taken a terrible toll on many banks. The situation grew even more serious as Europeans began to withdraw gold from the country—nearly \$1 billion from New York City banks alone in the week before Roosevelt’s inauguration. Fearing the worst, American depositors began to line up to withdraw their accounts as well, so that by the time the new president took his oath of office, over five thousand banks had already closed their doors.¹³

In the face of this crisis Roosevelt acted decisively, ordering that banks across the nation be closed and calling Congress into special session to devise legislation for fixing the problem. In the course of eight hours on March 9 the legislature passed the Emergency Banking Act, which not only took the United States off the gold standard but also gave the federal government authority to investigate all national banks and to reorganize those that were declared insolvent. By March 15, 70 percent of the banks that the president had ordered closed reopened their doors; by the end of March, nearly \$1 billion in deposits had returned to the banking system. One of the Roosevelt’s chief advisers, Raymond Moley, would later claim, with a bit of hyperbole, that the capitalist system “was saved in eight days.”¹⁴

The president’s response to the banking crisis met with thunderous applause from most Americans, Flynn among them. At a luncheon sponsored by the League for Industrial Democracy, the writer commended FDR’s actions. “This is good all around,” he told the audience. “It is good for our peace of mind. It is good for business. It is also good because now

no one can object to our discussing our banking problems without upsetting the apple cart.”¹⁵ Those problems, Flynn believed, were severe, and unless they were dealt with the situation would grow even worse—unemployment would increase, production would continue to fall. The only way to avoid “an unparalleled national disaster” was by launching “*an economic program designed to produce income.*” He called for a massive public works program aimed at “construction enterprises that will yield wages,” particularly “the clearing away of slums and the building of new housing.” Most important, however, bankers had to be prevented from using depositors’ funds for the purpose of speculation in “doubtful securities.” Congress, he insisted, had a responsibility “to end these infamies while the opportunity is ripe.”¹⁶

Congress would in fact take up the banking issue in the spring, but Flynn would be disappointed with the results. The Glass-Steagall Act, which Roosevelt would sign in June, had some provisions that Flynn wholly approved of, most important the prohibition on commercial banks engaging in investment banking—an abuse that he had railed against in the past. His main concern, however, was that the bill did not touch what he saw as at the heart of the problem, namely, holding-company banking. As long as banks could continue to be owned by larger holding companies, their primary responsibility would be not to their local depositors but rather to their distant owners. Furthermore, he predicted that it would prove impossible to enforce the separation between commercial and investment banking, since it was likely that both would continue to be operated by the same holding companies. If this were to continue unchecked, he argued, it would spell “the beginning of the end of the capitalist system.”¹⁷

The situation would be made even worse, Flynn believed, by the establishment of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which was to insure all bank deposits of up to \$2,500. Far from encouraging reform, he claimed, it would remove what little pressure depositors could still place on bank managers. If their deposits were to be guaranteed, why should they bother to care when their money was being used irresponsibly? Flynn, therefore, denounced Glass-Steagall as “a perfect example of the haphazard and unintelligent manner in which America deals with her great . . . economic problems.” Ultimately, he concluded that regulation of the banks was insufficient; only nationalization would do, since in a country like America, “with its immense resources and its primitive ethics

in the field of money, such a power in the hands of private persons is simply unthinkable.”¹⁸

Flynn’s criticisms of Wall Street and the banking system did not remain limited to the pages of national magazines, for in August 1933 he joined the staff of Ferdinand Pecora, who since January had been serving as chief legal counsel for the Senate Banking and Currency Committee. The committee was engaged in an investigation of the New York Stock Exchange, and Pecora, an assistant district attorney in New York, had assembled an impressive group of accountants, economists, and lawyers to gather the necessary information.¹⁹ Flynn had followed Pecora’s activities from the beginning, since he was at the time working on a book on the economic effects of speculation.²⁰ In August he wrote an encouraging letter to Pecora, who responded by offering him a position on his staff—which the writer eagerly accepted.²¹

Flynn’s job on the subcommittee was to oversee research on securities markets, and to that end he helped to draw up a questionnaire, which would then be distributed to members of stock exchanges throughout the country. However, he soon came to the conclusion that certain members of the Banking and Currency Committee—Virginia Democrat Carter Glass chief among them—were less than enthusiastic about the investigation. Flynn suspected that the stock exchanges, with the collusion of Glass and several other committee members, were funding a campaign of propaganda against reform. Newspaper editorials were appearing, he reported in “Other People’s Money,” claiming that the investigation was hindering recovery by encouraging doubts about the soundness of the system. He feared that even the president might be swayed by such arguments, as he seemed continually worried about “the equilibrium of his pet apple-cart.”²²

Nevertheless the investigation continued, and in early October, Flynn and another committee member paid a visit to Richard Whitney, president of the New York Stock Exchange, to see if he would distribute the questionnaires to members of the exchange. Flynn would later recall that when Whitney saw him enter his office he lost his composure; he rose from his desk and, face flushed, rushed out of the room, mumbling all the way. He returned a few minutes later, only to refuse to distribute the questionnaires. Instead he engaged the two men in a heated argument, denouncing the Pecora investigation and calling the stock exchange “a perfect institution.” It did him little good, as only a few days later Whitney

and many other prominent Wall Street figures were subpoenaed to appear before the committee.²³

Flynn was pleased with his work on the committee, although it consumed a tremendous amount of time. He would recall later that he would spend the day attending hearings; then, after eating dinner with his fellow investigators, would take part in a series of briefings on the next day's agenda that would last until two or three in the morning. Flynn had a particularly high regard for Pecora himself. He would later describe him as a man who, "through the intricate mazes of banking, syndicates, market deals, chicanery of all sorts, and in a field new to him, never forgot a name, never made an error in a figure, never lost his temper." He found it particularly appropriate—and uniquely American—that millionaires such as Richard Whitney, Jack Morgan, and Charles Mitchell had to justify their practices to an Italian immigrant whose salary never exceeded \$250 a month.²⁴

Eventually the Pecora Committee was charged with the task of drawing up legislation to address the problems of security trading. Flynn suggested a ban on margin trading, as well as a regulation forbidding the incorporation of any firm that belonged to the stock exchange; this would, he pointed out, prevent such firms from enjoying the protection of the corporation laws. The committee failed to include these reforms in its proposed bill, preferring instead to set firm limits on margin requirements and placing the activities of the exchanges under the authority of the Federal Trade Commission. Nevertheless, Flynn still believed that it was a solid piece of legislation, one which would deal a powerful blow "to a serious social and economic evil." He was pleased, therefore, when Senator Duncan Fletcher (Dem.-Florida) and Representative Sam Rayburn (Dem.-Texas) introduced the bill in Congress.²⁵

The financial community, however, was outraged by the proposal and launched what Flynn called an "amazing and unparalleled storm of propaganda." But it was not only Wall Street that disliked the bill; President Roosevelt believed it was too radical as well. He asked that it be revised and sent Assistant Treasury Secretary Thomas Smith and Federal Reserve Board Governor Eugene Black to, in Flynn's words, "take out of the bill almost all of its teeth." When a compromise bill passed Congress in May, Roosevelt happily placed his signature on it.²⁶

It would be an overstatement to claim that Flynn was uniformly hostile to the Securities Exchange Act of 1933. He liked that it gave the federal government—in the form of the new Securities and Exchange Com-

mission (SEC)—oversight into the affairs of the stock exchanges. He also appreciated that corporations marketing securities on the exchanges would be required to file statements of disclosure, thus placing vital information at the disposal of the average investor. In this sense, he wrote in *Harper's*, it represented “a definite advance” over the previous unregulated system.²⁷

Nevertheless, Flynn found the bill disappointing overall, as it did nothing to remedy many of the abuses he had been writing about since the 1920s. Corporations would still be allowed to employ salesmen to promote stocks, even on the floor of the exchange. Nothing was done to curb the activities of the investment trusts, whose managers could continue to load them with overvalued securities. Finally, he found the margin requirements (55 percent of the current market price or 100 percent of the lowest market price of the previous three years) utterly insufficient to curb speculation. He therefore doubted how much good it would do in practice, concluding that there was “hardly a stock abuse which ran wild during these last dozen years which would have been curbed if this bill had been on the statute books.”²⁸

Although Flynn recognized the role that Wall Street “propaganda” had played in the watering down of the bill, he ultimately placed the blame for the result on the administration. He was convinced that Congress was “ready and willing” to pass a bill that was closer in form to what the Pecora Committee had originally recommended. Moreover, he believed that public opinion would have supported more drastic curbs on the stock exchanges. It was Roosevelt and his allies in Congress who refused to do what was necessary to address the “deeper and more important economic evils” that went on in the present system. Wall Street bankers, he wrote, “should remember him [the president] with gratitude.”²⁹

Flynn at this point had still not lost hope that, insufficient as the current legislation was, there might be some improvement. The bill left a great deal to the discretion of the new Securities and Exchange Commission, particularly when it came to licensing requirements for the exchanges. If the SEC were made up of “men of unimpeachable integrity” and “not sullied by ulterior ambitions,” it might just do some good. He suggested three possibilities for SBC chairman, all of whom had served on the Pecora Committee—Thomas Corcoran, Ben Cohen, and Pecora himself, “whose tremendous service to the nation through the long, arduous and monumental investigation . . . laid the groundwork for the bill.”³⁰

Roosevelt, however, had other ideas. He did name Pecora to the commission, but for SEC chairman he tapped none other than Joseph P. Kennedy, an old friend of the president's who also happened to be a well-known speculator. Flynn was beside himself. The choice, he wrote, was "grotesque." Kennedy was "that worst of all economic parasites, a Wall Street operator" who had been involved in the very abuses that the SEC was supposed to correct. And while he applauded the choice of Pecora, he noted that his term would last only a year, while Kennedy would be around for five. The commission, he concluded, "may be counted as a complete loss. And the loss is the work of Franklin D. Roosevelt alone."³¹

If Flynn was disappointed by the president's approach to stock market reform, he was horrified by the administration's efforts to revive the economy. In June 1933, Roosevelt signed into law the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which encouraged industries (acting mainly through trade associations) to draft codes that would govern competition. As long as firms agreed to limit production and avoid so-called cut-throat measures such as lowering prices, the theory went, profits would rise and unemployment would fall. Moreover, each code would be required to include a minimum wage for workers, a maximum for the length of the work week, and a guarantee of labor's right to organize and engage in collective bargaining.³²

The National Industrial Recovery Act immediately set off alarm bells for Flynn, as it seemed to embody precisely the idea of "self-rule in industry" that he had been attacking for years. Even Herbert Hoover, he wrote, had the good sense to prevent businesses from trying to impose trade standards on their industries. While he reiterated his support for some form of national economic planning, he thought that the planners should be experts, men "trained as social economists." Instead, he claimed, the job was to be done by "a group of Wall-Street lawyers, industrialists, and a stockbroker or two for good measure." The National Recovery Administration (NRA), the bureau Roosevelt set up to administer the NIRA, was rife with "Morgan alumni" such as Walter C. Teagle of Standard Oil, Alfred P. Sloan of General Motors, and Wall Street financier Bernard Baruch. In other words, the administration was placing the economy "under the control . . . of the same men who milked it and wrecked it in 1929."³³

Although at this point he still made it clear that he supported the president, whom he insisted was "a man of sincere good intentions,"

Flynn objected to the entire theory behind the NRA. It assumed that the central problem facing the economy was overproduction, which was causing prices to fall, profits to shrink, and people to be laid off from their jobs. By reducing production, the administration claimed, profits would increase, stock prices would rise, and the economy would thereby recover. However, Flynn claimed that overproduction was a myth; industry, in fact, even during periods of prosperity produced far less than what Americans were able to use. At the heart of the crisis, he claimed, was underconsumption—most people simply lacked the means with which to purchase “even the simple necessities of life.” If purchasing power were increased, so would consumer demand, so that prices would rise naturally. However, the NRA tried to place the cart before the horse—trying increase purchasing power by raising prices. Not only would this fail to revive the economy, but by placing more consumer items out of the reach of an already deprived public, it was objectionable on moral grounds.³⁴

Flynn also believed that the NRA offered nothing for workers. The guarantees of minimum wages, maximum hours, and the right to organize and bargain collectively, he claimed, were nothing more than “an empty collection of syllables.” He noted that the first draft of the legislation had not even included any mention of collective bargaining, and that General Hugh S. Johnson, the head of the NRA, had no real interest in it.³⁵ Moreover, since the drafting of the codes would be largely in the hands of businessmen, the regulations of wages and hours would be set at levels that no employer would need worry about. In December 1933, Flynn reported on an incident in Boston in which workers at a tannery struck for higher wages. Since the tannery already paid above the level stipulated by the tanners’ code, the federal government made no effort to protect the strikers. As a result, he claimed, the company felt free to send a group of its guards to attack picketers with clubs; ten of them were hospitalized. “From the beginning to the end,” he wrote, “labor has been betrayed by the NRA.”³⁶

But what amazed Flynn the most was that despite the fact that the NRA was stacked so heavily in favor of big business, conservatives insisted on denouncing it as a plot to bring about the “regimentation” and “Russification” of the American economy. By the same token, the NRA was being hailed on the left as a liberal agency simply because it was championed by someone—namely, the president—who was identified as

a liberal. It was nothing of the sort, Flynn claimed. It ultimately represented an effort on the part of the administration to win the support of businessmen. It would not work, he predicted; industrialists and financiers “will turn on him and tear him to pieces no matter what he does.”³⁷

While Flynn had been willing to give Roosevelt the benefit of the doubt through 1933 and the first half of 1934, by the middle of the latter year he was coming to the conclusion that the New Deal was a fraud. While he admitted that there had been some signs of economic revival in the first few months of the Roosevelt presidency, they had been the result of public spending to the tune of \$300 million a month. Flynn was certainly not opposed to public spending as a means of temporary relief, but he insisted that it would do nothing to promote genuine recovery, since a new collapse would occur as soon as government spending was reduced. Indeed, a collapse could come even earlier than that—in August he noted that despite the administration’s pumping over \$4 billion of public money into the economy, the construction industry was operating at a level even below that of 1933. The *New York Times* index for business activity showed a decline from 89.8 in early August 1933 to 79.4 a year later, while over the same period average stock prices fell from 89.11 to 79.14.³⁸

What had gone wrong? Flynn concluded that Roosevelt was as clueless as Hoover had been when it came to identifying the underlying problems of the economy. Recovery would not come until consumer spending resumed, and the only way for that to happen was to bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth. Indeed, he noted that average employee wages were falling, even as the unemployment rate declined. “The world has changed,” he wrote in August 1934, “and there is a cry for social justice that no party dares to ignore.”³⁹

Flynn had a few suggestions for solving the problem of inequality. He noted approvingly that some states had already passed minimum-wage laws but emphasized the need for a national standard in order to protect those states that lived up to their responsibilities from unfair competition from those that had not. He railed against the exorbitant salaries paid to corporate executives and suggested that the corporation laws be changed to limit them. He demanded a “vast program” of public spending—mainly on construction projects—to relieve unemployment. Finally, he renewed his advocacy of the “security wage,” a government-run system of unemployment and old-age insurance.⁴⁰

In all of these areas Flynn found the president wholly lacking. When it came to public works, Flynn noted that the administration had failed “to put the slightest energy or enthusiasm behind it.” Even Hoover, he pointed out, had spent more on federal construction projects than Roosevelt had in the first year and a half of his presidency. FDR also seemed to have no interest in old-age pensions or unemployment insurance, having failed even to mention the subject for the first fourteen months of his presidency. Even after he announced his social security plan in June 1934, Flynn remained skeptical, predicting that business interests, acting through their friends in the administration, would water it down to the point of meaninglessness. All that seemed to matter to the president, the writer complained, was the NRA; it was as if, he recalled later, Roosevelt felt that the program “would produce recovery before it was necessary to spend.”⁴¹

Thus, by late 1934, Flynn was thoroughly disenchanted with Franklin Roosevelt, in whom he had earlier placed such high hopes. He might have just as well been referring to his own sense of disillusionment when he wrote that the public had made the president out to be “Moses, Lycurgus, Cagliostro, Herman the Great, Houdini, Mussolini, and Rudy Vallee rolled into one.” During the campaign much had been made of the so-called Brain Trust—a group of prominent academics such as Raymond Moley, Rexford Tugwell, and Adolf Berle. But to Flynn’s dismay, these men seemed to play little role in the actual administration. Instead, Roosevelt had chosen to surround himself with corporate executives, bank presidents, and industrial magnates. Flynn counted over forty of these men occupying visible positions in the administration, concluding that Wall Street had “both its feet planted strongly in the New Deal.” This was the reason, he claimed, behind Roosevelt’s demand to water down the Securities Exchange Act, his implementation of the NRA (which he called the “fatherless brat” of the Chamber of Commerce), and his failure to spend heavily on public works. Liberals, he wrote, had to face facts—the president had posed as one of them, but all they could really expect from him were “sweet words with no meaning behind them.”⁴²

In fact, there are signs that Flynn was moving further to the left during this time. As he began to lose hope in the New Deal, he started to question whether capitalism might be worth saving to begin with. He expressed these sentiments in a radio address that he gave near the end of 1933, in which he told his audience that “we must socialize industry.” The only question would be who would manage it. Under the New Deal

it would be “the employers, the producers, the financiers in their trade guilds,” which for Flynn amounted to fascism. The alternative was to have the people manage industry by way of the state. This might be socialism, he said, but it was better than fascism.⁴³

This perhaps explains why Flynn greeted the results of the congressional midterm elections of 1934 with some excitement. The new Congress, he noted happily, was far more radical than the administration, far different from “the compliant batch of ‘yes’ men” that had held office during the first two years of Roosevelt’s presidency. He expected this to trigger nothing less than a political realignment by 1936. Business interests, realizing that their best hope lay in a continuation of the New Deal, would abandon the Republican Party for the Democrats; after all, he wrote in an open letter to businessmen, “Could any Republican President have done more for you? What one has ever done as much?” Meanwhile, the “liberal and radical elements” would rally to a third party—probably the Progressive Party of Robert and Philip La Follette of Wisconsin.⁴⁴

Flynn therefore entered 1935 with a sense of optimism. At the same time, however, he was growing increasingly distrustful of the president in the realm of foreign affairs. He began to suspect that Roosevelt intended to draw the country into a war as a means of fostering economic recovery. How he reached this conclusion is the subject of the next chapter.

Pay as We Fight

In December 1933, John T. Flynn wrote of the possibility that Germany's new chancellor, Adolf Hitler, might provoke a European war by attacking Poland. Americans, he claimed, must stay out of such a war at all costs. He noted, however, that "in times like these vast numbers of men lose their hatred of war." In the grip of economic despair, they looked back to the example of 1914, when the outbreak of war in Europe brought about recovery, thanks to millions of dollars in foreign contracts to provide war matériel. But Flynn insisted that such reasoning was not only faulty but dangerous. Europeans in 1914 had plenty of cash with which to purchase American products, while in the early 1930s they were "very near the edge of bankruptcy." Far from promoting recovery, war would "completely destroy" what little international trade remained. It would be "the most terrible catastrophe in all history," one the United States had to avoid.¹

Those familiar with Flynn's work in the late 1930s and early 1940s would probably remember him best for his fervent opposition to American intervention in foreign conflicts.² In 1934 he became legal adviser for a Senate investigation into the role of international bankers and munitions makers in the international arms trade. Four years later he became national chairman of the Keep America Out of War Congress, and in early 1941 he would be made chairman of the powerful New York City chapter of the America First Committee. His views on foreign affairs easily did as much—if not more—to cement his bitter opposition to the Roosevelt administration as did his objections to the New Deal. In fact, he believed that the former flowed naturally from the latter.

There was a tendency, both at the time and later, to attribute Flynn's views on foreign policy to his Irish-Catholic upbringing; he was, in the words of one unfriendly source, the "eternal Hibernian in eruption." To be sure, he had little nice to say about Great Britain. He firmly believed

that British propaganda about the German threat to democracy had lured the United States into fighting to protect the British Empire in World War I. In a radio debate in late 1938, he compared Britain to Jekyll and Hyde. “At home she is the benign Dr. Jekyll,” he told his audience, but in “her international relations she is the malignant and predatory Mr. Hyde.” When, in the following year, the king and queen of England made the first visit of reigning monarchs to the United States, he dismissed them as “divinely inspired mediocrities”; when Americans cheered their visit, he claimed that they had made “damn fools of themselves.”³

Yet it would be an oversimplification to reduce Flynn’s positions on foreign affairs to Anglophobia. He personally found it interesting that his critics never were willing to entertain the possibility that “I may be animated by an interest in my own country.”⁴ Moreover, while he opposed American involvement in World War II, he was neither a pacifist nor a fascist sympathizer.⁵ It is more appropriate to look to his progressivism, particularly his suspicion of corrupt businessmen, and his willingness to attribute great evils to the actions of particular individuals. Flynn, like many Americans, had become convinced that war itself was a racket—a scheme in which powerful bankers and industrialists, allied with unscrupulous politicians, sought their fortunes at the expense of the public interest.

That said, it is possible to overstate Flynn’s interest in foreign affairs. As noted in Chapter 1, the writer claimed later on to have been deeply influenced by the debate over American annexation of the Philippines. The implication was that this experience led him to oppose imperialism of any kind and to favor a strictly noninterventionist foreign policy. However, one searches in vain for any reference to the subject in any of his published writings before December 1933, and indeed, it would not be until the mid-1930s that he would be recognized as any sort of authority on international relations. It seems more likely that it was Flynn’s disillusionment with the New Deal that fueled his interest in foreign affairs, and not the other way around.

One of the aspects of Roosevelt’s personality that Flynn would later claim had first bothered him was the president’s fondness for things military. In 1940 the writer would reflect that he had suspected as early as 1932 that the Democratic nominee for president was “a born militarist.” After all, Roosevelt had served as assistant secretary of the navy under Woodrow Wilson and had a professed love for warships. A close friend of Roosevelt’s, he wrote, had predicted that if a war ever broke out in Eu-

rope he would try to involve the United States. Yet since Flynn recorded this long after he had turned against the administration, there is some room for skepticism; after all, this alleged fear of the candidate's warlike nature did not deter him from endorsing Roosevelt over the far more pacifistically inclined Herbert Hoover.⁶

It is clear, however, that Flynn detected evidence of the president's "militarism" during Roosevelt's first term, even though foreign affairs took a backseat during that period. Particularly bothersome was FDR's fascination with weaponry, especially battleships. The sort of men "who love weapons and sentimentalize about them," Flynn reasoned, tend to be the same ones who possess "profound confidence in the power of weapons . . . to settle controversies." In November 1935 Flynn used his *New Republic* column to write an open letter to FDR in which he suggested the creation of a new "quasi-national holiday" along the lines of Navy Day. He wondered why the president was such an enthusiastic supporter of the navy, which had killed hardly any Germans during the war. Much more appropriate, he suggested, would be "Machine Gun Day . . . celebrated with speeches, patriotic hymns, the militia marching around with the machine gun carried aloft as the symbol of our muscular civilization." Flynn also criticized the president's appointment of Harry F. Woodring as Secretary of War, referring to him as "the leader of the jingoes." And he was particularly worried about the Civilian Conservation Corps, one of Roosevelt's efforts to reduce unemployment among young men. While the writer favored public works projects, he objected to the fact that the men in the program were required to live in camps, under military-style discipline. Was this a disguised attempt to build up the armed forces?⁷

As the 1930s wore on and the New Deal had failed to bring about an end to the depression, Flynn began to wonder whether the president might begin to view military spending as a means to economic recovery. While this might bring about a certain amount of prosperity in the short term, it would be exceedingly dangerous in the long run. He feared that such spending would crowd out other investments, and that the nation's economy would therefore become "hopelessly dependent" on a continued military buildup. Moreover, the only way Congress and the American people would consent to keep pumping money into defense was through the use of trumped-up threats to the nation's security. Ultimately, he feared, there would be an upsurge in the "warrior spirit," leading the country to become entangled in yet another foreign war.⁸

Flynn's interest in the connection between the military and the economy helps to explain why, in early 1934, Senator Gerald P. Nye (Rep.-North Dakota) asked him to become part of an investigation into the role of American arms manufacturers in the international munitions trade. Although a Republican, Nye had a reputation as an agrarian progressive—if not an outright radical—and thus he was chosen to head the investigation despite the fact that the Democrats controlled Congress. The senator had admired Flynn's work on the Pecora Committee and asked him to direct this new inquiry. The writer was enthusiastic about the project but felt compelled to refuse, as he was at the time in the midst of completing his book on security speculation (see Chapter 3). He did, however, agree to serve as legal adviser to the committee, and in early June he met with Nye and his colleagues to plan their investigation.⁹

The committee conducted hearings through the autumn of 1934, calling representatives from some of the most prestigious arms makers in the country to testify. The hearings brought forth a few truly shocking revelations about the activities of some arms dealers in their relationships to the governments of European and South American countries. Certain munitions dealers were revealed to have engaged in a wide array of shady practices, including bribery, to drum up business abroad. In the process they generated astronomical profits, particularly during World War I. Yet, while the hearings provided some eye-catching headlines, they hardly offered the sort of bombshells that the committee had been hoping for. For example, it turned out that the much-feared “arms lobby” spent far less in promoting munitions sales than pacifist groups spent trying to prevent them. Representatives of firms such as DuPont and Remington discussed their business affairs in a calm, rational, and unpretentious manner—as even Flynn had to admit. These were hardly the “merchants of death” that had been imagined in some of the popular literature of the time.¹⁰

This likely explains why, when the original \$50,000 appropriated for the investigation ran out in December, there was little enthusiasm on the part of Congress to provide more funds. Flynn was extremely disappointed; for him, the inquiry had “only scratched the surface.” The committee had finished its examination of foreign governments and had begun to probe the connection between munitions makers and the federal government itself. He informed Bruce Bliven that investigators had been working quietly in the Navy Department for many months and were on the verge of revealing “the long ugly story” of the incestuous relationship that existed between prominent shipbuilders and the U.S. Navy. The in-

quiry, he wrote, was “going to touch some pretty big people” both inside and outside of the navy.¹¹

What Flynn found most disturbing was the attitude of the president. Roosevelt had originally endorsed the committee’s goals and had announced his support for the initial appropriation. Now, however, he was silent, and Flynn believed he knew the reason. The investigators had interviewed a man who claimed to be chairman of what was called the “naval committee” of the Democratic National Committee. This individual testified privately that his job in 1932 had been to approach shipbuilding companies for campaign contributions. He then showed them a letter that he sent, in which he made a point of mentioning that the Democratic candidate for president was “very friendly to the navy and would favor generous construction.” It was, therefore, “good business” for them to help his campaign. Flynn, therefore, “had not the slightest doubt” that it was Roosevelt himself who had ordered that the investigation be stopped.¹²

The Senate ended up appropriating another \$50,000—far less than the \$100,000 the committee had asked for but enough to allow the inquiry to continue. The committee had a more specific purpose in mind than simply embarrassing arms dealers and politicians, and Flynn would play a far more direct role in the next stage of the investigation. Like Nye and his colleagues, Flynn was convinced that munitions makers had been at least in part to blame for the outbreak of World War I. In the years immediately before the war, they had engaged in a campaign to “set nation against nation” and “create alarms and suspicions” for the purpose of selling their products. Therefore, the writer began the task of writing legislation aimed at “taking the profit out of war.”¹³

However, he soon found he had competition from the White House, for Roosevelt had by this time begun to sour on the investigation. One reason for this was as Flynn suspected—the president had grown concerned lest the investigation interfere with his plans for a larger navy. But FDR’s disenchantment was also driven by his fears that the inquiry was generating public support for isolationism,¹⁴ and by the fact that Nye himself was increasingly being talked about as a possible contender for the Republican presidential nomination for 1936. Therefore, in December the president announced that he had appointed his own committee, headed by Wall Street financier Bernard Baruch and former NRA chief Hugh S. Johnson, to consider the subject of war profiteering. Flynn immediately smelled a rat. Baruch had earlier gone on record as opposing

any radical curtailment of wartime profits, while Johnson had clashed with the writer over the NRA. Flynn therefore referred to the administration's efforts as a "red herring," intended merely to undercut support for the Nye Committee's own efforts.¹⁵

In spite of the president's apparent obstruction, Flynn went ahead with the drafting of his own plan, which he submitted to the Nye Committee on March 19. The reason for massive wartime profiteering, he told the committee, was that government deficit spending created inflation. Moreover, this would lead to economic depression in the postwar period, when the spending suddenly stopped. The way to avoid this vicious cycle was to force the American people to "pay as we fight," through taxes rather than borrowing. To this end Flynn laid out a twelve-point program, all of which would take effect immediately upon a declaration of war. Among these were a 50 percent tax on the first 6 percent of corporate profits, with a 100 percent tax on all corporate profits beyond that, and a massive expansion of the income tax to include everyone earning \$1,000 or more, with a maximum rate of 100 percent on all incomes over \$10,000. The plan would have instituted quarterly withholding of income taxes from paychecks, the closure of all commodity exchanges (prices would instead be fixed by the government), and the commandeering of essential industries and services. To ensure that no corporation would try to place roadblocks in the way of these policies, all high-ranking corporate officers would be immediately made subject to conscription into the armed forces.¹⁶

While Flynn admitted that this might seem "very, very drastic"—indeed, it would require three constitutional amendments to make it legal—he insisted this was actually not the case. After all, he said, there was nothing "unreasonable" about asking "a man to run a factory for the same sum that you pay a general commanding in the field." The overall goal, Flynn claimed, was to change the "war psychology of the American people." They must understand that if the country had to go to war, it must be for some great national objective, and not as a moneymaking enterprise.¹⁷

President Roosevelt at this point followed an unexpected course: he summoned Nye to the White House on that very day and, after a brief meeting, announced to reporters that he was in full agreement with the principles behind Flynn's proposal. This came as a surprise to both Nye and Flynn, neither of whom had believed that the administration would ever support such a radical plan. Moreover, although he had not publicly

endorsed any war-profit plan, he was said to be secretly backing an alternative proposal that had been put forward by Representative John McSwain (Dem.-North Carolina), chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee. Based on the conclusions of the Baruch-Johnson Committee, McSwain's was a much milder piece of legislation that merely gave the president the authority to impose wage and price controls in time of war. In his testimony before the committee Flynn had dismissed this alternative as completely ineffectual, as it did not address the subject of deficit spending. To try to control prices during a war was "like pouring immense floods into a weak dam and at the same time passing a law that the water must not rise higher than a certain point."¹⁸

The members of the Nye Committee apparently agreed with Flynn's assessment, for in early April they formally endorsed his twelve-point program for taking the profits out of war. Nye himself admitted that the new bill—entitled the "Emergency Wartime Act"—was "drastic," but this was understandable, since "war is a drastic thing." No one, the North Dakotan told reporters, should be able to "profit in any manner from the conduct of a war." But while Flynn's version went before the Senate's Military Affairs Committee, the McSwain bill was already making its way through the House. A battle was clearly brewing between the two competing approaches, and it was soon obvious where the administration's support lay. Despite his words of encouragement to Nye on March 19, Roosevelt quickly distanced himself from Flynn's proposal—in fact, the very next day he told reporters that he had not "considered it in detail."¹⁹

At first it appeared that the McSwain bill had the upper hand, as the House was traditionally, in Flynn's words, "a kind of servants' hall for the White House." However, the debate over the bill just happened to coincide with the anniversary of U.S. entry into World War I—a foreign entanglement that, by this time, most Americans had concluded was a mistake. In a solemn ceremony that generated a great deal of press attention, wreaths were laid on the statues of three members of Congress who had opposed the declaration of war on Germany. On that same day, Representative Maury Maverick (Dem.-Texas) introduced legislation in the House that sought to avoid a repeat of 1914–1917 by mandating an embargo on arms sales to any country at war. In this atmosphere, the McSwain proposal appeared all too mild, and congressmen began falling over one another to add amendments to the bill that would make it closer to Flynn's Senate version. Even McSwain himself got into the act, adding

a tax of 100 percent on all “excess profits,” although he never bothered to specify what that meant. By the end of April 6, the *New York Times* reported that the bill had been modified “beyond recognition,” and that House leaders had chosen to adjourn rather than see the amended version pass on that very day.²⁰

However, the circus-like atmosphere of April 6 quickly gave way to more practical considerations. The War Department began issuing dire warnings that the Senate bill and the McSwain bill as amended were likely to hamper production of war matériel. Bernard Baruch agreed, insisting that in a capitalist economy only the likelihood of substantial profit would motivate firms to produce the items needed for war. The current bills, he concluded, amounted to attempts “to abolish the present economic system in war.” Columnist Arthur Krock went even further, suggesting that neither bill really aimed at its stated goal of financing wars; rather the bills sought “to discourage war by providing the certainty that the well-to-do would be ruined when war was declared.”²¹

Nye and Flynn both fired back, accusing Baruch of trying to water down any legislation to the point of meaninglessness. But their fight was rapidly becoming hopeless. On April 9 the House killed one by one the various amendments that had been made to the McSwain bill, which passed in practically its original form by a lopsided vote of 367 to 15. The Nye-Flynn alternative, meanwhile, had no support from either the administration or the Democratic leadership in the Senate. While it was reported favorably out of the Military Affairs Committee, it died before a subcommittee of the Finance Committee, whose chairman, Tom Connally (Dem.-Texas), had opposed Nye’s investigation from the start.²²

The proceedings of the Nye Committee ended on an inglorious note in the first weeks of 1936. Anxious to recapture the headlines his investigation had garnered in late 1934, Nye decided to call representatives of the Morgan banking interests to testify regarding the loans they had made to the Allies during the First World War. During the course of this testimony, the North Dakota senator made the mistake of implying that former president Woodrow Wilson had lied when he claimed ignorance about British and French war aims. The implication was quite correct, but it brought upon Nye the fury of the former president’s supporters, many of whom were still in the Senate. One Southern Democrat, Carter Glass of Virginia, delivered an impassioned speech in which he allegedly pounded the table so violently that his hand bled. The Democratic leadership concluded that

the investigation had gone too far; they would appropriate no more to carry on the committee's work.²³

Most historians have taken a dim view of the Nye Committee's investigations, claiming that they operated from the ridiculous premise that arms merchants and international bankers had lured the country into World War I.²⁴ Yet Flynn himself insisted this had never been the issue. In his *New Republic* column he complained that the committee's enemies had successfully set up a "straw-man thesis that the American people went into the War for profit." This was absurd; clearly, it was the submarine issue that proved to be "the proximate cause" of U.S. intervention in World War I. Since this "straw man" could be easily knocked down, the committee could then be dismissed as conspiracy-mongers. In reality, he claimed, the inquiry had shown that U.S. firms, through loans and arms sales to the Allies, had made a great deal of money from the European war. But because this commerce was with only one side, the country ceased to be truly neutral, "and thus invited the train of events that brought us into the war."²⁵

Yet it is difficult to ignore the unsavory aspects of the committee's proceedings, which some authors have compared to the McCarthy hearings of the early 1950s. Both were conducted with a tone of extreme self-righteousness, more like crusades than impartial investigations. The "merchants of death" theory may have been absent from the final report, but committee members frequently phrased their questions and comments in a manner that suggested they were already convinced a conspiracy existed among arms dealers to start wars for profit. At many points in the inquiry those who had been called to testify ended up being subjected to personal abuse. One witness, for example, was referred to as "the gentleman who has made mass murder the pastime of the world." This side of the investigation fit in with Flynn's personality—his crusading spirit, his tendency to seek simple (albeit draconian) solutions to complex problems, and in particular his willingness to demonize those who held opinions contrary to his own.²⁶

However one views the Nye Committee and Flynn's part in it, it is certain that Roosevelt's political maneuverings during its proceedings left the writer even further convinced of the president's duplicity. Moreover, he viewed FDR's support for the McSwain bill as a warning sign that the administration was prepared to take the country to war as a means of solving its economic woes. This was an increasing worry for the writer in the

next few years, since it seemed that there was no shortage of international crises that might flare up into war. The first of these crises, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, took place in October 1935, while the Nye Committee was still engaged in its work.

The Italo-Ethiopian War would serve as the first test for the Neutrality Act, which had been passed as a temporary measure in August. The act had come about in part as a response to the findings of the Nye Committee; in fact, Nye and his colleague Senator Bennett Champ Clark (Dem.-Missouri) had drafted the legislation at the request of the president himself. The Neutrality Act stipulated that whenever a war broke out anywhere in the world, the president would make a declaration invoking the act's terms. It would "thereafter be unlawful to export arms, ammunition, or implements of war" to any of the belligerent powers. Roosevelt proclaimed the bill "entirely satisfactory" and signed it into law on August 31. However, even at that point the president had serious misgivings about the law, suggesting that "situations may arise" in which the "inflexible" arms embargo "might drag us into war instead of keeping us out."²⁷

When Italian troops entered Ethiopia, Roosevelt not only invoked the provisions of the Neutrality Act but even upped the ante by calling for a "moral embargo" of other goods on the belligerent powers. Flynn was pleased and even defended the administration from criticism by the editors of the *New York Times*, who claimed that this "new neutrality" would hinder economic recovery by cutting the United States off from lucrative foreign markets. The writer scoffed at this assessment; American firms had lost, at most, \$5 million from the "moral embargo," while during World War I loans to Italy had cost the country more than \$2 billion.²⁸

As for the war in Ethiopia, Flynn had nothing but scorn for Fascist Italy, which was trying "to assert her ancient Roman heroism by shooting up the legitimate descendants of Solomon and Sheba." Moreover, he predicted that the war would demonstrate the fundamental weakness of the fascist economic system; Mussolini's government had gone deep into debt to build up a military machine in an effort to create prosperity. The country then went to war in search of material gain, but even if the Italians won, they would still end up even deeper in debt. The lesson, he claimed, was one that the Roosevelt administration would do well to heed.²⁹

Even though Flynn applauded the president's invocation of the Neutrality Act, he was very much on his guard as the British government began to exert pressure on Italy to cease its aggression against Ethiopia. He noted with dismay that the State Department was pushing for a revision of the neutrality legislation that would grant the president the authority to impose the arms embargo against only one side in a war. The writer insisted that "nothing could be more ill advised," as it would mean giving the chief executive the power to determine which side was right and which was wrong—and this was precisely the opposite of neutrality. This sort of power, he argued, should not be granted to the president. Above all, it should not be put "into the hands of so unstable a man as Mr. Roosevelt."³⁰

Behind the talk of a discriminatory arms embargo, Flynn believed he saw the hand of Great Britain. Flynn claimed that the British had a mysterious hold not on the minds of ordinary Americans "but over certain persons who have access to the press, the pulpit and other agencies of propaganda." He believed that his "pro-Anglican virus" was strongest in the State Department, which was filled with men who were "horrified at the thought of America's not helping England in a war." This was a theme to which Flynn would turn again and again in the next few years, and indeed through the rest of his career.³¹

The writer became even more alarmed about the administration's intentions after Roosevelt's reelection in 1936. In an article in the winter 1937 issue of the journal *Southern Review*, Flynn warned that keen observers of politics should look for "a flowering of Mr. Roosevelt's militaristic sympathies" in his second term. Events seemed to bear this out when Japanese forces invaded China that summer. Since there was no formal declaration of war forthcoming from Tokyo, the administration refused to invoke the terms of the neutrality laws (which by this time had become permanent and had widely expanded in scope). Indeed, Roosevelt praised those "risk-takers" who continued to trade with China in spite of the Japanese invasion. Flynn believed that the president, by refusing to invoke the legislation in this case, was deliberately siding with China, and the writer reminded the American people about "another well-known risk-bearer,"

that young, healthy sap who is at this moment running the risk, without knowing it, of being dragged into the army in order that trade may move

along its accustomed paths for the benefit of his brother risk-bearers who have goods to sell.

The president, he concluded, believed that neutrality meant “sitting as an umpire or referee to see that the fighters are evenly matched.”³²

Soon reports were reaching the United States that the Japanese were using aerial bombardment against Chinese cities. To Flynn this made little difference; he mocked the “pious horror” that some were expressing, informing his readers that there was “no such thing as civilized war. It is the negation of civilization.” In the Old Testament, he reminded them, the Hebrews did not hesitate to wipe out entire populations, even without benefit of bombers. The real danger was that Americans might be moved by their feelings of sympathy to enter a war that would benefit only those who sought to protect their trade with East Asia.³³

His fears became even more pronounced in December, when Japanese aircraft bombed and strafed the U.S. gunboat *Panay*, which was on patrol in the Yangtze River. The administration reacted with outrage, and for a while even some of the most committed anti-interventionists in Congress dropped their demand that the president invoke the neutrality acts. Flynn, however, remained unmoved, particularly when Senator William E. Borah (Rep.-Idaho) revealed that the *Panay* had been in China to protect a convoy of tankers owned by Standard Oil. The writer pointed out that back in September the State Department had advised Americans to leave China, informing those who remained that they did so at their own risk. Why, he wrote, did this not apply to Standard Oil? He concluded that Roosevelt had deliberately left the *Panay* in harm’s way, in the hope that just such an incident would arise. As he wrote to Borah, this was all part of a larger administration strategy “to inflame the imagination of the American people and to stimulate support for a big armament program.”³⁴

By 1938, then, Flynn had become convinced that the president was deliberately promoting a series of “war scares” in order to win public support for massive spending on the army and navy. He cited an unnamed source who allegedly overheard Roosevelt say, “Armament is not only necessary but it will create widespread employment. Look at Germany. There is not an idle man in Germany. They are at work in the armament industries.” But while the chief executive’s goal might have been to use military spending to stimulate the economy, it would ultimately bring the country to war, just as, Flynn believed, it had led Mussolini’s Italy to at-

tack Ethiopia. Meanwhile the State Department, from Secretary of State Cordell Hull on down, was plotting “to put us definitely on the side of Britain and France.” The United States had taken the first steps on the path to war. What amazed Flynn most was that this was all taking place under “a Democratic administration supposedly in the possession of its liberal wing.”³⁵

Flynn, in fact, was growing increasingly worried about the condition of American liberalism. He noted with dismay that Senator George W. Norris (Rep.-Nebraska), who had voted against U.S. involvement in World War I and had been instrumental in the formation of the Nye Committee, expressed his support in December 1937 for a larger navy. Flynn was moved to write to the senator to express his concern. “You kept your head during the Great War . . . when the whole world was losing its head,” he told Norris.

Since that time many men who were carried away by the war spirit have been disillusioned; many who believed you were wrong [in 1917] have come to recognize that you were right. I have not been able to shake off a sense of spiritual depression ever since reading that you now seem to be among the first to surrender to the emotional stir.

He was equally chagrined when Lewis Mumford, his friend and ally from the Board of Higher Education (see Chapter 5), announced that America should “stand resolutely against fascism in any war that may take place.”³⁶

However, not all liberals felt this way. Stephen Raushenbush, son of the famous progressive Walter Rauschenbusch,³⁷ wrote to congratulate Flynn for making “the case [for neutrality] clearer than any others.” Oswald Garrison Villard, contributing editor of *The Nation*, thanked him for his “good straight out democratic writing,” adding “thank God for Flynn.”³⁸

In fact, prominent liberals, socialists, pacifists, and labor leaders from all over the country came together to form the Keep America Out of War Congress (KAOWC) in March 1938. The organization was the brain-child of Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas, who, during a visit to Europe in the previous year, had concluded that war was inevitable. Upon his return, he began to build an umbrella organization consisting of all the smaller antiwar groups that already existed, such as the National Council for Prevention of War, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Youth Committee Against War. Its early membership read like a veritable "who's who" of the American Left, including such names as Bruce Bliven, Senator Robert M. La Follette, Jr., Oswald Garrison Villard, Dorothy Detzer, and Frederick J. Libby. From the beginning the organization called for reductions in military spending and denounced any possible involvement in an "imperialist" war that would benefit only large corporations.³⁹

Given the group's aims and general flavor, it was not surprising that Flynn would become involved in the KAOWC. In March 1938 he spoke at its first rally—although one of its organizers noted that he was "peev'd" that he was given only five minutes on the program—and by the end of that month he had agreed to serve as New York chairman. However, as the organization expanded, so did the writer's role within it. Several of the group's leaders sought to develop a national committee that would serve "to coordinate the work of all the various peace and neutrality groups." This, of course, meant having a national chairman, someone who could appeal to liberals, socialists, pacifists, and labor leaders alike. After considering Charles Lindbergh, historian Charles Beard, and Flynn, they settled on John A. Lapp, a prominent labor arbitrator. However, Lapp resigned after holding the position for a year, and Flynn agreed to succeed him. He would serve as national chairman until mid-1941.⁴⁰

By the middle of 1938, Flynn was a full participant in the anti-interventionist movement. At the same time, however, war in Europe was becoming increasingly likely. In March, Adolf Hitler, having just absorbed Austria into Germany, issued a demand that Czechoslovakia surrender the mountainous frontier province known as the Sudetenland. Up to this point Flynn had written very little about Hitler, and while he had no sympathy whatsoever for Nazism, he clearly viewed the German *führer* as a typical politician. He saw right through Hitler's claim that his main purpose was to bring more German-speaking people into his Third Reich; his interests, Flynn insisted, were economic. If the dictator could "add this rich Middle-European Pittsburgh to his assets," he wrote, "he will have greatly enriched Germany's economic resources." He further predicted that Hitler would eventually try to seize the Ukraine. Given such appetites, war seemed inevitable.⁴¹

In late September the Czech crisis seemed to be settled when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and French Premier Edouard Dal-

adier traveled to Munich to negotiate personally with Hitler. They managed to pressure the Czechs into giving up the Sudetenland in return for the führer's promise to respect the sovereignty of the rest of the country. For Flynn, this was simply evidence that the old game of European diplomacy was hopelessly corrupt. He compared Chamberlain to "a butcher boy calling for Mr. Hitler's order" and wondered whether at some point, if war threatened with Japan, the prime minister might fly to Tokyo and offer the emperor not only the Philippines but also "Hawaii, Alaska and Southern California." Between Chamberlain's Britain and Hitler's Germany, the writer found little to choose.⁴²

War had been averted, at least for the moment. Nevertheless, Flynn kept up a steady stream of criticism toward the administration in the mid-to late 1930s, in which he increasingly connected Roosevelt's alleged warmongering to the failure of the New Deal. But national politics would not be his only concern during this period, for in July 1935, New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia had asked him to serve on the city's Board of Higher Education. Flynn was about to move from the realm of journalism to that of activism, and would in the process involve himself in some of the city's biggest controversies of the decade.

A Pretty Sorry Board

In July 1935, Flynn received a visit at his office from Paul Kern, the civil service commissioner of New York City. Kern explained to him that the city's system of higher education was "hopelessly bogged in the mire of reactionary politics" and desperately needed some good liberals to be a part of it. The alumni association of the City College of New York City had recently complained to the mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia, about the makeup of the city's Board of Higher Education, which had jurisdiction over all the colleges operated by the city—which, at that time, were Brooklyn College, Hunter College, and City College. There was, it turned out, a vacancy on the board, and a delegation of City College alumni had brought him a list of around ten individuals whom they recommended to fill the position. Flynn's name was at the top of that list. The mayor was prepared to appoint him; would he accept?¹

Flynn was not enthusiastic about the possibility. Members of the board served for nine-year terms and received no salary for their efforts. Moreover, he had resolved to remain "free of public boards or office," for fear that such a position might compromise his role as a journalist. However, since the mayor was an old acquaintance, he decided at the very least he should go and talk to him about it. At City Hall, Flynn told LaGuardia that he was already committed to too many other things, and so he would not accept the position if it would demand much of his time. The mayor assured him that it would not; the board met only once a month, and aside from that there was "very little else" in the way of work. He then went on to suggest that Flynn had a civic duty to serve, and so the latter, a bit shamefacedly, said yes. Immediately, he would recall, LaGuardia gave a signal to his secretary, "and instantly some seven or eight photographers entered his office. The mayor said: 'Hold up your hand,' there was an explosion of bulbs and I was sworn in as a member of the board. Thus my career in education was launched."²

Flynn would remain on the board for a full term, from 1935 to 1944, and for the first six years he was one of its most active members. He believed that the mayor had selected him to serve as a voice for liberalism in higher education, and he took that responsibility very seriously indeed. He brought with him to the position a passionate commitment to academic freedom, an ingrained hostility to anything that smacked of petty tyranny, and a tendency to sympathize with the underdog. He also brought with him the same zealous energy and crusading spirit that had characterized his journalistic career up to this point. All of this would come into play as Flynn waded into one of New York City's biggest controversies of the 1930s.

The controversy centered on City College, which was the scene of campus unrest the likes of which would not be seen again until the late 1960s. City College in the early 1930s, writes historian Robert Cohen, "produced student radical leaders at about the same rate that Notre Dame churned out college football stars." The college was one of a tiny handful of institutions in the United States that charged no tuition, and as a result, most of its student body was working class in origin. The campus was crowded, with roughly six thousand students using facilities that were designed for twenty-five hundred. Moreover, many students came from the city's Jewish ghettos, which historically had been havens for the radical tradition. Even in the conservative 1920s, City College was one place where leftists were not treated as pariahs.³

The president of City College at the time was Frederick B. Robinson, who decided that the unrest was the work of "communists." Between 1931 and 1935 he had either expelled or suspended more than a hundred students for participating in "radical" activities. At one time or another, every campus group or newspaper that espoused views left of center found itself banned or censored. Indeed, Robinson seemed to take personal pleasure in dealing with "radicals," calling in police to break up protests, and at one point he was even said to have entered the melee himself, allegedly striking several protesters with his umbrella. However, such repressive measures served only to radicalize more of the student body. In the eyes of students, Frederick Robinson came to personify all that was reactionary in higher education. Starting in late 1932, the president was the continual target of student resentment; any campus protest, whether focused on fee increases or the presence of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, was sure to include the burning in effigy of the unpopular president, and all this was duly reported in the local press.⁴

Alumni in general were becoming concerned about all the negative publicity surrounding their alma mater, which was starting to be referred to as a “little Red schoolhouse.” The largest of the alumni associations, the Associated Alumni of the City College, established a committee in December 1934 to determine why there had been so many demonstrations. After nearly a year of studying conditions, a majority of the committee (twelve of its sixteen members) issued a report in January 1936, and the results were none too flattering to President Robinson. The report dismissed his claim that “outside propaganda groups” had sought to create “a hotbed of subversive radical agitation” on campus. The problem, the report asserted, was that the president lacked “the human qualities necessary to achieve the widespread confidence of his faculty and his student body and to provide genuinely inspired, resourceful and socially imaginative leadership.” It furthermore called upon the Board of Higher Education to step in and hold its own investigation.⁵

Under ordinary circumstances little attention would have been paid to the appointment of a new member to the Board of Higher Education. There was nothing glamorous about it, and previous mayors had viewed it as little more than a source of political patronage. As a result, many of its members were dilettantes—wives of prominent local figures, retirees, and a few independently wealthy individuals. Few seemed to have any particular expertise in the field of higher education. Most of them were connected in some way with Tammany Hall, the infamous political machine of New York’s Democratic Party. It was, therefore, in Flynn’s words, “a pretty sorry board.” Little wonder, then, that its members were generally willing to defer to the presidents of the colleges. Its chairman, a lawyer named Mark Eisner, tended to accept Robinson’s interpretation of the unrest at City College—that the disturbances were the work of a tiny, unruly minority, and that once they were expelled the problem would be solved.⁶

However, the circumstances surrounding Flynn’s appointment to the board in the summer of 1935 were anything but ordinary. Although the press reported that it was “understood” that City College alumni had pressed Mayor LaGuardia to select him, Flynn insisted that he knew “very little about the job as yet.” Indeed, the papers reported that he seemed “a little surprised that he had been chosen at all.” Nevertheless, he left little doubt as to his position on the recent events at City College. When asked by reporters about the expulsion of students for their alleged involvement in “Communist activities,” he replied that he “believed in

complete freedom of speech.” Frederick Robinson was about to gain a potentially powerful enemy on the Board of Higher Education.⁷

Flynn met with the board for the first time in September, and he had little good to say about the group he was about to join. He commented on several of its members, and he had never been one to mince words. He referred to Dr. Laurence Cassidy from Queens as “Dr. Assidy,” describing him as “a crude magistrate court type of Tammany lawyer . . . harsh, vulgar, violent.” Judge John Dwyer was “a pleasant little man but without any capacity for independent action.” The same was true of the three women on the board; they were “mere rubber stamps, voting as they were told.” While he admitted that Mark Eisner, the chairman, was “a gentleman of ability and culture,” but claimed he was far too “tied up with the machine” (i.e., Tammany Hall) to make much of a contribution. Even those who had previously been appointed by LaGuardia did not necessarily win Flynn’s approval; while he was impressed with Charles Barry’s credentials (he was secretary of New York University), he believed that Ernest Seelman was “hopelessly reactionary.”⁸

Although at this point Flynn admitted that he had “only the foggiest notion” of what was going on at City College, he did know that Robinson had a reputation as a “vigorous reactionary.” To Flynn, the president was just the sort of petty tyrant that deserved to be brought down, particularly after the investigative committee of the Associated Alumni released its report in January 1936. The report proved a bombshell from the start, particularly since a minority of the alumni committee (four of its sixteen members) issued one of its own, claiming that the majority’s findings were “based upon erroneous premises and insufficient investigation.” The minority praised Robinson’s policies and blamed the demonstrations on “a relatively small group of students not primarily concerned with the welfare of the college or of its student body.” Like the majority report, that of the minority called on the Board of Higher Education to intervene, but to uphold discipline and hence to protect the good name of the college.⁹

The immediate result was a controversy that soon went beyond the college, and which showed the immense gulf that separated individuals and groups on the subject of student radicalism and campus unrest. Organizations such as the student council, the New York Teachers’ Union, the college’s Anti-Fascist Association, and the New York City chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and even the editorial staff of the *New Republic* quickly endorsed the majority report, denouncing

Robinson's "high-handed, reactionary tactics" and calling on the board to replace him with "a progressive, understanding and capable educator." By contrast, most of the college's faculty, students in the college's School of Business and Civic Administration, the Newman Club Alumni of New York, several New York City-area Chambers of Commerce, and the local chapter of the Naval and Military Order of the Spanish-American War issued statements supporting Robinson's "enlightened leadership" in the face of "a small group of disorderly boys, egged on by subversive elements."¹⁰

Yet when both reports reached the membership of the Associated Alumni, it was that of the majority that was approved, by a vote of 519 to 217. Robinson's defenders immediately objected that the committee did not accurately represent the alumni of City College, as none of its members had graduated before 1897. Nevertheless, it was the majority report that was formally submitted to the Board of Higher Education in February, and there it was referred to the board's administrative committee, which promised to hear testimony from both sides. Flynn was a member of this committee, as was Lewis Mumford, noted authority on urban planning and a 1918 alumnus of City College. LaGuardia had named Mumford to the board not long after his appointment of Flynn, and also at the recommendation of City College alumni. The two men knew one another from their work on the *New Republic* and understood that their mandate was to move the board to the left—specifically, by taking a hard line against Robinson.¹¹

The investigation of Robinson and conditions at City College began immediately, but as time went on it became apparent to Flynn and Mumford that certain members of the committee were actively working to exonerate Robinson. They suspected that these members—chief among them Charles Tuttle—were leaking the committee's findings to the president, so that he might prepare a defense. The final straw came near the end of the investigation, in late May, when Tuttle was drawing up the report. At this point Flynn was outraged to learn that after two professors had dared testify against Robinson, the transcripts of their appearance before the committee had been passed on to the president's office. It had been difficult to find faculty members who were willing to criticize the president, and he believed that Robinson had managed to frighten them into silence. The two professors had promised to testify against him on the condition of anonymity, and Flynn was concerned that this "outra-

geous breach of confidence” would keep other faculty members from coming forward.¹²

Flynn promised to go to City College personally to investigate the violation of confidentiality, but in the meantime he suggested to Mumford that the two of them inform Tuttle that they were resigning from the investigating committee. It would be best to do so before the committee issued its report, which was certain to be a “whitewash” of Robinson. They should then inform Dr. Henry Moskowitz, president of the Associated Alumni, who could be expected to “blow the lid off in a public statement” that would undoubtedly attract the attention of the press.¹³

Mumford followed Flynn’s lead, and thus neither man was present when the administrative committee met on May 28 to consider the report, which seven of the ten members agreed to approve. As expected, it amounted to a “vote of confidence in the President,” drawn up by Tuttle, whom Flynn referred to derisively as “Robinson’s lawyer.” The report was to be submitted to the entire board on June 9; Flynn believed that Tuttle was trying to time it so that it would be overshadowed in the newspapers by the Republican National Convention, which was slated to begin on the same day. He therefore advised Moskowitz to issue a statement denouncing the “whitewash” so that it would appear in the press on Monday, June 8. Moskowitz would also mention in his statement that Flynn and Mumford had withdrawn from the investigation in protest. This would remove the necessity of “our flying to the papers,” he wrote to Mumford, by ensuring that “the papers fly to us.”¹⁴

Meanwhile, Flynn along with Charles Barry (who had been one of the three who refused to sign the report) visited City College to gather evidence that Tuttle had leaked information to Robinson. There Flynn learned that all the investigation’s transcripts had been mimeographed in Robinson’s office, making the case against Tuttle “fairly complete.” This revelation, he believed, combined with pressure from the alumni and the newspapers, might be enough to encourage board members to vote to reject the report. He would not ask the board to make any judgment on Robinson at that time; he would claim only that Tuttle’s partisanship had compromised the investigation, and that it should therefore be allowed to continue under different leadership.¹⁵

Moskowitz did as he was asked, issuing a statement condemning the committee for “arbitrarily and prematurely” ending the investigation before a “full and impartial search for the truth had begun.” He also told

reporters that Flynn and Mumford had resigned more than a week earlier, and, as expected, the press immediately approached Flynn for comment. He explained that he had concluded that the inquiry had become a “farce,” and that he could not be part of any committee that would engage in “a whitewash—and a very thin coat” at that. However, the writer could not have been pleased when the *New York Times* chose to run the story on page 21.¹⁶

The June 9 meeting of the Board of Higher Education would be one of the stormiest in that organization’s history. The committee’s seventeen-page report, while it conceded that there was considerable student unrest at City College, attributed this to “unsettled world conditions,” overcrowding on campus, and “the general political and economic tension of the day.” It rejected any notion that Robinson was a tyrant; indeed, it claimed to find at the college “a freedom of expression on the part of students and student organizations which is scarcely exceeded (if exceeded at all) in any institution of higher learning.” Claims to the contrary had been “sedulously fostered by an insistent and continuous propaganda” circulated with the encouragement of “radical organizations.” While the report recommended that some of the president’s disciplinary authority be delegated to a Dean of Men, it concluded that there was “no justification whatever” either for dismissing Robinson or for calling on him to resign.¹⁷

Flynn and Mumford, meanwhile, issued a statement of their own, explaining to their fellow board members why they had felt the need to distance themselves from the investigation. The committee, they claimed, had disregarded “every principle of intelligent inquiry” in order to exonerate Robinson as quickly as possible. It had based its evaluation of the president on extremely limited testimony and had made no serious effort to talk to students. The blame for this lay squarely on Tuttle, “the friend and collaborator of Dr. Robinson,” whom, they claimed, had behaved “more like a counsel for the defense than an impartial investigator.”¹⁸

From Flynn’s perspective, the results of the meeting were mixed. On the one hand, after a debate that lasted into the wee hours of the morning, the board chose to accept the committee’s report by a vote of fourteen to seven. However, this result did not necessarily imply satisfaction with the status quo. The board also voted to form a subcommittee—to be headed, again, by Tuttle—to conduct a new inquiry into conditions at City College and to recommend new measures for dealing with student unrest. This new committee would be charged with looking into not only

Robinson's policies but also those of deans, department heads, and other high-ranking members of the institution's faculty.¹⁹

Thus, even though Flynn had failed to stop Tuttle's "whitewash," he had some reason for optimism. Tuttle refused to have anything to do with the new committee, which for Flynn meant that its inquiry might actually be effective. At the same time, since its focus would be broader, it might be able to rid City College of not only Robinson but a whole cadre of officials who had backed and carried out his policies. Finally, he found consolation in the changing composition of the board itself. Of the seven who had voted against the committee report, six had been appointed by Mayor LaGuardia. Several of those who had voted in favor were elderly and might resign at any time, while the mayor himself seemed secure in his position. As long as LaGuardia continued to appoint liberals to the board—and he promised Flynn that he would—the tide would eventually change. Time was on his side.²⁰

Meanwhile, the students of City College remained as dissatisfied as ever. Disappointed by the board's report, the student council decided to hold a referendum on Robinson's job performance, and the results were hardly flattering. When asked whether the president's "blunders in administration outweighed his contributions" to the college, 352 voted yes, while only 63 voted no. To the question of whether the situation at City College could be remedied "merely by limiting President Robinson's disciplinary power," as recommended by the administrative committee, 53 said yes, 337 no. Finally, when asked whether Robinson ought to be removed from office, 332 voted yes, with only 57 opposed.²¹

All this helps to explain why Flynn did not object when board president Mark Eisner failed to appoint him to the new investigative committee. Eisner's reasons are not recorded, but it is likely they had something to do with Flynn's grandstanding tactics. His histrionics in board meetings and his willingness to issue independent press statements suggested that he had been no more an "impartial investigator" than Tuttle had been. In any case, the composition of the committee gave Flynn no cause for complaint. Tuttle having declined to serve, Charles Barry was selected to be chair. Among the other four members were Mumford, Maurice Deiches, and Joseph Klein—all three of whom, like Barry, had voted against the "whitewash."²²

For his part, Robinson said nothing in public regarding Flynn at the time—after all, it would not do to provoke any board member needlessly—but it is clear that he viewed the writer as a threat to his authority.

At about this time he spoke with agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation as part of an inquiry into “Subversive Activities in Educational Institutions.” He told them that his “principal difficulty in maintaining proper discipline” at City College stemmed from LaGuardia’s appointees to the board. Of these, Flynn was “the most harmful,” since the writer publicly claimed on numerous occasions that his administration was “not at all satisfactory” and had made it clear that as soon as he had a majority “the situation would be changed.” The writer, Robinson further charged, also “made statements, wrote articles and was quoted in the press in a manner which was detrimental to the discipline and morale” of the college.²³

It would be a mistake to conclude that Flynn spent all his time on the Board of Higher Education fighting against Robinson. In fact, he would play a highly constructive role in establishing a new institution, Queens College. There had long been complaints that, in spite of high standards on the part of admissions, the three existing colleges operated by the local government were too crowded, and that therefore an additional institution was necessary. The board purchased a forty-acre plot of land in Queens with seven preexisting buildings, and appropriated nearly \$500,000 to renovate and equip them. The goal was for the new college to open in the fall, with an initial enrollment of between four hundred and five hundred students. Board President Mark Eisner decided to entrust Flynn with overseeing this process, and in the spring of 1937 he appointed the writer chairman of the Queens College Administrative Committee, which was made up almost entirely of LaGuardia appointees, including Mumford. The writer was elated. The committee was “overwhelmingly liberal,” which meant, he wrote Mumford, that “we can run this job as we choose.”²⁴

The most important part of the job would be finding a suitable candidate for dean of the institution, and in this Flynn was adamant that the person chosen would not become another Robinson. He therefore chose to solicit advice from an acquaintance, Robert M. Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago. He was looking, he explained, for someone who would serve as a true contrast to “the pitiful character” of the leadership at City College, and whose values would perhaps ultimately “infect” that institution as well. “We therefore want a man of the highest character and ability, one who will be an educational leader.” Above all, he told the *New York Times*, the college must not wind up “in the hands of an autocratic president and his ‘yes men.’”²⁵

After less than a month of consideration, the committee settled on Paul Klapper, a senior faculty member at City College—and, perhaps not coincidentally, one of the two faculty members who had dared testify against Robinson the previous year. But while the committee was enthusiastic in supporting Klapper, Flynn realized that, since Klapper was Jewish, it would be a controversial appointment. “Some of our noble citizens,” he wrote to Mumford, “are disturbed lest someone who is not a true-hearted American be named.” Those opposed to Klapper rallied instead around a man named Rutledge, a high school teacher with (as Flynn wrote) “a flair for public agitation.” Although Flynn dismissed him as “without any qualifications,” a group of local citizens formed a group called the Queens College Association to fight for his appointment. The group bombarded Eisner with telegrams asking for an opportunity to be heard at a meeting of the full board. Eisner wanted to ignore them, but Flynn would not hear of it, insisting that “the old right of petition” must not be denied. However, he predicted that their testimony would be ineffectual, since they could not come out and give their real reasons for backing Rutledge, namely, that he was “a conservative and anti-semitic and to some extent anti-Catholic.” All they could try to argue was that he had superior credentials to Klapper’s, and this was demonstrably not true. Once they had spoken their piece, Flynn wrote to Mumford, “we can go about our business of naming Klapper.” Indeed, this is precisely what happened, although two board members voted against the appointment, charging that the selection process had moved too quickly.²⁶

Queens College opened its doors that autumn as scheduled. Two weeks after the start of classes, a formal ceremony was held in recognition of the event, featuring Mayor LaGuardia and Harvard President James B. Conant as speakers. But it was at a testimonial dinner given in Klapper’s honor on October 30 that Flynn allowed himself to express publicly his satisfaction with the result. At this event, which was attended by both Mayor LaGuardia and Governor Herbert Lehman, the writer referred to unnamed critics of Klapper who predicted that the campus would quickly become a hotbed of radicalism. “I know of a dozen colleges in this country that could have American flags flying all over the place and the buildings painted red, white and blue, and they would still not be American colleges,” he told those in attendance. He then went on:

Today there is a great battle going on over American ideals. I believe that this country has produced the finest ideal of democratic opportunity

of any country in the world. The way to deal with the question is not to have less democracy, but to have more democracy. I believe that the democracy which is good for society is good for the campus.²⁷

Flynn's work in setting up Queen's College did not distract him from the ongoing fight against Robinson; indeed, he seems to have believed that LaGuardia had appointed him for the express purpose of ridding City College of its president. He realized that the present constitution of the board prevented him from taking any direct action, but he also believed that the situation that had existed in the spring of 1936—when the board approved the infamous “whitewash”—was already changing. In September of that same year, two more members of the board retired (one of whom was a fervent Robinson supporter), giving the mayor an opportunity to select two more of his supporters. The *New York Times* noted that of the twenty-one members, nine were LaGuardia appointees. It might not be long, the paper speculated, before liberals were in complete control. Flynn promised “fireworks” when that happened; as he wrote gleefully to Lewis Mumford, “presently the scene will be beautifully set for the exit of our diminutive little chum.”²⁸

But if Flynn showed persistence in his goal to rid City College of Robinson and his supporters, the mayor sometimes seemed preoccupied with other concerns. LaGuardia's election in 1933 and reelection four years later depended on a tenuous alliance of Republicans and reformist Democrats held together by little more than their common opposition to Tammany Hall. Moreover, like any successful politician, he knew that patronage was an important element in keeping his supporters happy. He was perfectly willing to listen to Flynn's advice in making new appointments to the board, and many times he acted on that advice—most notably in selecting Ordway Tead, a regular contributor to the *New Republic* who would eventually succeed Mark Eisner as president. However, on other occasions he let politics dictate the choice. For example, when Lewis Mumford resigned in the summer of 1937—an occurrence that Flynn claimed left him “actually depressed”—the mayor appointed E. S. MacDonald, a vice president of Manhattan Bank with no liberal credentials, to fill the vacancy.²⁹

Flynn seemed oblivious to political considerations, attributing such appointments to the mayor's “tempestuous” nature. MacDonald, he wrote to Mumford, was a “run-of-the-mine small-time non-partisan political banker,” with “no social vision beyond the range of the Chamber

of Commerce, Rotary Club and Legionnaire mind.” Why, he reasoned, if LaGuardia wanted to see Robinson removed, would he choose to disregard his advice and appoint people to the board who were not solidly committed to that goal? The writer reported that he went to the mayor’s office, where “a rather hectic discussion” ensued.³⁰

The last straw for Flynn came in February 1938, after the death of Maurice Deiches, a key ally in the struggle against Robinson. It was, Flynn wrote, “a terrible loss to the Board.” What truly outraged the writer, however, was that after he returned home from the funeral he received a telephone call from Eisner informing him that the mayor had already appointed one Carrie Medalie as Deiches’s replacement. He wrote to Mumford in despair:

I keep asking myself why I should have from a third to a half of my time consumed in a hopeless fight where the man who has thrust me and others into this breach continually sends reinforcements to the enemy.³¹

After a sleepless night Flynn informed the mayor that he intended to resign, in spite of Mumford’s pleas to stay the course. “I have been terribly moved by the grave injustices and all the mean little tyrannies imposed upon hundreds of fine young scholars by small-bore despots” like Robinson. However, thanks to LaGuardia’s recent appointments—he characterized Medalie as “a colorless conservative who takes her views from her conservative Republican husband”—he could count on only nine board members to vote in favor of the president’s removal. “I am no longer interested in argument and debate and squabbling on the Board. I am interested in votes and these are gone.”³²

As it was, the mayor refused to accept Flynn’s resignation and promised that he would continue to make anti-Robinson appointments until a solid majority was attained. The writer remained on the board, but he would never forgive LaGuardia for the “shameful manner” in which he replaced Maurice Deiches. The mayor’s candid views on the subject went unreported, but it is reasonable to suspect that Flynn’s attitude would play a role in his decision not to reappoint him in 1944.³³

Lacking an effective majority to take on Robinson directly, Flynn chose a stealthier course. For him, the worst feature of the president’s petty tyranny was the degree of control Robinson exercised over individual faculty members, so Flynn championed several measures that would undermine Robinson’s authority in this regard. Ever since early 1936 he

had backed a reorganization plan that would unite the various colleges operated by the city into a single system, known as the City University of New York. For Flynn, this would be the first step in setting up “centers in every borough and in the different parts of every borough so that facilities might be accessible to students through widely scattered areas.” A single chancellor would oversee the entire system, which would have the added benefit (for Flynn) of keeping Robinson and the other college presidents in line. Finally, he pushed for a revision in the bylaws that would take the power over faculty appointments, tenure, and promotion away from the presidents and place them in the hands of departmental committees.³⁴

When the plan had first been unveiled in 1936, Robinson announced that he would “raise the roof” in opposition. Indeed, even the mayor expressed concern that it would amount to “sovietizing the colleges.” However, in the following months Flynn and his allies organized a series of hearings in which students, faculty, staff members, and alumni testified in favor of reorganization. The press commented favorably on the plan, and public opinion was courted assiduously. Eventually, Flynn wrote to Mumford, “the immense pressure from all ranks” became “so great that opposition simply faded away like a mist.” When the reorganization plan finally came before the board in the spring of 1938, it passed without a dissenting vote.³⁵

All this was a prelude to the final act. Robinson, Flynn gleefully reported, was “horribly deflated” by the reorganization. Moreover, the mayor acted on his promise, appointing solid liberals to fill two more vacancies on the board—one of which he himself created by appointing a pro-Robinson member to another post in his administration. Flynn was thrilled, announcing his intent “to act swiftly—like Hitler.”³⁶

By this time Robinson was suffering from ill health, with a blood pressure of 230; “not nearly high enough,” Flynn quipped. His contract was up for renewal in 1939, but he applied for and was immediately granted a one-year sabbatical. In October 1938 he moved to Arizona, where he soon received word from his old friend Charles Tuttle that his position had become “untenable.” Rather than face the increasing likelihood of dismissal, he sent a letter of resignation in December.³⁷

Flynn had finally won his great victory, one that was made even sweeter as Robinson’s most loyal supporters within the administration followed him out of City College. By the summer of 1939, the writer concluded that “the democratic system” had been at last established, and he

resolved to reduce his involvement with the board for at least the next several months. After all, it was not a paying position, and it had taken a great deal of time away from the more lucrative pursuit of writing. Specifically, he was working on a book on Roosevelt that he hoped would be ready by the end of the year. What he needed to do now, he told Mumford, was to “kick the colleges out of my life” for a while.³⁸

But it was not in Flynn’s nature to avoid controversy for long, and in early 1940 he threw himself into a serious battle that emerged over the appointment of the eminent British philosopher Bertrand Russell to a chair in philosophy at City College. In late February the college—whose president, Nelson Mead, had succeeded Robinson nearly two years earlier—proudly announced that the renowned scholar would be joining the faculty, and Ordway Tead personally sent a letter welcoming him. Indeed, the Board of Higher Education had not even considered the matter to be controversial, and it approved the appointment unanimously.³⁹

The explosion came on March 1, when the bishop of New York City’s Episcopal Church, William T. Manning, sent the board an open letter of protest. Russell, he claimed, was “a recognized propagandist against both religion and morality.” Quoting several passages on marriage and other moral issues, he concluded by asking, “Can anyone who cares for the welfare of our country be willing to see such teaching disseminated with the countenance of our colleges and universities?” The letter appeared in newspapers throughout New York City and was reported in much of the rest of the country as well.⁴⁰

By this time the press knew that they could count on Flynn to provide an explosive quote, and he did not disappoint. When asked to comment on the bishop’s letter, the writer defended Russell as “a man of the highest character, whose morals will compare favorably with those of Bishop Manning.” While he personally did not agree with his views on marriage, he noted that the philosopher had not been hired “to teach his religious views, any more than the Episcopalian, Jewish and Catholic instructors have been appointed to teach theirs.”⁴¹

Manning’s letter and Flynn’s response created a public stir that rivaled the Robinson controversy of the mid-1930s. Religious individuals and organizations, from Norman Vincent Peale to the Knights of Columbus, registered their agreement with the bishop, calling the appointment of Russell “a disgrace to our city and an affront to the vast majority of its citizens.” By contrast, nearly three hundred faculty and staff members at City College affixed their signatures to a petition in support of Russell,

and students held a massive rally on his behalf in early April. Even the distinguished scientist Albert Einstein commented on the situation, which inspired his famous quote “great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.”⁴²

The controversy found its way back to the Board of Higher Education when Charles Tuttle demanded that the body reconsider the appointment. Tuttle, a former president of the Greater New York Federation of Churches and a member of Bishop Manning’s diocese, had been absent at the meeting in which Russell’s hiring had been approved. Most of the board, he claimed, had been ignorant of the Englishman’s views on morality when they voted, and they therefore deserved a chance to reconsider. Moreover, he insisted, the appointment was “clearly illegal,” since Russell was not a citizen, and state law prohibited the hiring of aliens to teach in public schools. As for Flynn’s comment to the press, Tuttle called it an “apparent sneer” against “a courageous Christian leader who has called what seems to be the facts to public attention.”⁴³

Flynn took the lead in the fight to defend Russell’s appointment, just as he had spearheaded the effort to oust Robinson years earlier. For the board to rescind its invitation, he told reporters, would be “a shocking blow to the prestige of our colleges.” He found it abhorrent that “great, educated, sophisticated New York . . . should become now the stage of another monkey trial.” To combat the claims that were being made about Russell’s views, he prepared a list of extracts from the professor’s works, using extended quotes to show that “a strong ethical note pervades all of Russell’s writings.” Contrary to the accusations that were being thrown around, he concluded, the philosopher was a defender of marriage and the family, as well as a strong opponent of communism.⁴⁴

Had the matter come before the board of 1935, it is likely that the invitation would have been withdrawn. However, the appointments Mayor LaGuardia had made in the late 1930s gave the board a much more liberal cast. On March 18 the body entertained Tuttle’s motion to reconsider Russell’s appointment, but Tuttle could muster only six additional votes. One member claimed that “Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin would vote for him, too, if they were on the Board of Higher Education.” The board furthermore moved to recognize Flynn’s hard work “in exposing the unfairness of predication condemnation of a prolific writer by reference to isolated phrases and sentences, apart from their context.”⁴⁵

The board’s decision did not end the controversy, for the very next day Jean Kay, a Brooklyn housewife and mother of two, filed suit against the

board with the New York Supreme Court. She told the press, “I think somebody should put a stop to Russell’s teachings, and I believe millions of women feel as I do, especially those who have daughters.” A former city magistrate named Joseph Goldstein represented her, and in his affidavit he assailed Russell as “lecherous, salacious, libidinous, lustful, venereous, eroto-maniac, aphroditious, atheistic, irreverent, narrow-minded, bigoted and untruthful.” He claimed that the philosopher had endorsed homosexuality, and moreover that he had organized “a nudist colony in England,” in which he, his wife, and their children “paraded nude.”⁴⁶

The case came before Justice John E. McGeehan, a staunch Catholic who had once attempted to have a portrait of Martin Luther removed from a city mural. Tuttle filed a “friend of the court” brief in which he provided the judge with a list of quotations allegedly summarizing Russell’s views on marriage, religion, and morality. It did not take the judge long to rule. Claiming to be “horrified” by Tuttle’s brief, he voided the appointment, citing the state law that public school teachers had to be citizens and had to take a civil service examination. Moreover, he added, “[t]he appointment of Dr. Russell is an insult to the people of New York City and to the thousands of teachers who were obligated upon their appointment to establish good moral character and to maintain it in order to keep their positions.”⁴⁷

At this point Mayor LaGuardia got involved as well. He had been subjected to a great deal of pressure—both religious and political—ever since Bishop Manning had first registered his opposition to Russell’s appointment, and after Judge McGeehan’s decision he announced that he considered the case closed. Not only did he order the city’s lawyers not to take up the case, he also struck from the college budget the money that had been appropriated for the philosopher’s salary.⁴⁸

These events left the board pondering its next move. The body’s legal counselor, William C. Chanler, strongly advised against filing any sort of appeal. If the decision were affirmed by higher courts, he told the members, it would become binding precedent and would therefore result in “crippling your power of appointment in the future,” not to mention endangering the jobs of those currently serving on the faculty. Surely Russell was too controversial an individual to serve as the basis for a serious legal test. However, the board rejected this advice. To Flynn and most of the others, the decision was ridiculous; surely, they argued, City College was not subject to the same laws as a public elementary or high school.

They therefore voted overwhelmingly to file an appeal, naming Flynn to a three-person committee that would spearhead this effort. By the end of April the committee had found two prominent local lawyers who agreed to handle the case pro bono.⁴⁹

The Russell appointment, however, was beyond saving. That summer an appellate court refused to hear the board's appeal, ruling that the body had no right to pursue independent legal action. Ordway Tead moved that the special committee be dissolved, and the affair came to an end. Russell himself accepted a position as a lecturer at the Barnes Foundation, just outside Philadelphia, and the lectures he gave there would eventually form the core of his *History of Western Philosophy*, published in 1945.⁵⁰

Flynn's reaction to this outcome is unrecorded; indeed, by late 1940 he seems to have become almost completely detached from the board's activities. In fact, in December 1940 a group of state legislators known as the Rapp-Coudert Committee launched an investigation into the presence of "subversive"—that is, communist—activities in New York's public schools and colleges. Over the next sixteen months the committee conducted over seven hundred interviews, interrogated over five hundred witnesses, and recorded over thirteen thousand pages of testimony. Before all was said and done, seventeen faculty and instructional staff members were dismissed and eighteen others suspended; seven others resigned rather than face charges.⁵¹

In the midst of all of this commotion Flynn remained uninvolved. It is easy to imagine that the John T. Flynn of the mid-1930s would have unleashed a torrent of invective against what appeared to be a witch-hunt and a gross violation of academic freedom. It is equally easy to envision the Flynn of the 1950s leading the charge against communists in the schools. But at the time he pursued neither course. Instead, his only public utterance on the investigation came at a board meeting on December 16, 1940, in which he introduced a motion calling for the appointment of a committee to examine the evidence collected by the Rapp-Coudert Committee.⁵²

What had happened? One possible answer is that Flynn was in the midst of changing his mind about the threat of communism in America, a subject that will be more thoroughly examined later. The writer had never actually defended the rights of communists; he had merely denounced the practice of wrongfully accusing people of communist sympathies. Indeed, he would later justify his campaign against Robinson by

claiming that the autocratic president of City College created “a natural basis” for “socialist and Communist revolt.” Moreover, support for the Rapp-Coudert Committee’s work was not limited to hysterical red-baiters; even Flynn’s friend Norman Thomas insisted that certain individuals at City College were engaged in a “very Machiavellian sort of Communist propaganda in the school system,” and therefore that “investigation was in order.” It would seem that Flynn was willing at least to keep an open mind on the matter, and to make sure that the board would have a hand in whatever the committee did.⁵³

An even more obvious reason why Flynn remained relatively uninvolved in the proceedings was that other affairs were keeping him too busy. In early 1941 he was named chairman of the New York City chapter of the America First Committee, a commitment that would demand nearly all his time for that year (see Chapter 8). While he very rarely missed a meeting of the board in the late 1930s, he attended only two between February and December 1941, although he resumed his regular attendance after the United States became involved in the war.

Finally, it may have been apparent to Flynn by this point that his days on the board were numbered. Relations between him and the mayor had grown strained by the late 1930s, and LaGuardia’s all-out support for Roosevelt in 1940 could not have helped matters. The writer’s involvement with America First seems to have been the final straw; Ordway Tead would later recall that it made Flynn “politically unacceptable” in the eyes of the mayor, who in 1941 accused anti-interventionists of supplying propaganda for Hitler. Flynn had been useful, although often difficult to deal with, in ridding the college of Robinson and his minions, and thus in satisfying the alumni of City College. Now, however, that job was complete, so it came as no surprise when the mayor failed to renew his appointment once his nine-year term came to an end in 1944.⁵⁴

By most accounts, Flynn had been a popular member of the board; even his nemesis Charles Tuttle claimed to have liked him. Upon his departure, the body passed a resolution expressing “its appreciation for his long, loyal and effective term of service,” citing a long list of accomplishments, as well as “his wisdom, his leadership, his humor and his comradeship.” Some of the friends he made through his experience on the board, such as Ordway Tead and Paul Klapper, would remain on good terms with him even after he became associated with the Far Right. And in the end, it was Tead who eulogized him in the letter to the *New York Times* cited in the Introduction.⁵⁵

However, a great deal would happen in Flynn's life before the expiry of his term on the board. He would become one of the leading figures in the anti-interventionist movement and one of the country's most vociferous critics of Franklin Roosevelt. However, in the process he would put his credentials as a liberal in jeopardy, beginning what most observers saw as a gigantic swing toward the right. It is to these developments that we must now turn.

A Plague of Promisers

In the mid-1930s Flynn's career as a liberal journalist reached its high point, with a daily column in the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain, a weekly column in the *New Republic*, and articles appearing in some of the most influential journals in the country. In 1937 he would join the editorial staff of *Collier's* as associate editor, although his work continued to appear in that publication on a freelance basis. Throughout these years he continued his affiliation with the Rand School through its summer programs at Camp Tamiment. He had begun lecturing at the Pennsylvania resort in 1932, and by 1936 he was chairman of what was now called the Tamiment Economic and Social Institute. Every summer the institute featured liberal speakers such as Sidney Hillman, Donald Richberg, Felix Frankfurter, Henry Wallace, Ferdinand Pecora, and Fiorello LaGuardia. But perhaps Flynn's crowning glory during this period was his being asked to join the faculty of the New School for Social Research as a lecturer. Alvin Johnson, assistant editor of the *New Republic*, had been director of the school since 1926, and in 1935 he invited Flynn to give six lectures, at fifty dollars a lecture or 50 percent of the net receipts, on political and economic issues. "Nobody I know," Johnson wrote, "can present so clear and bold a picture of things as they are, in economics and finance, politics and social movements."¹

This was also a prosperous period for him personally. In 1935 he bought a Victorian mansion on the waterfront at Bayside, Long Island, which he set about restoring. In that same year his son, Thomas, graduated from Princeton with a degree in economics. With the help of his father's connections, Thomas soon landed a job as an investigator with the Federal Trade Commission.²

It was during these years that Flynn would earn a reputation as a determined enemy of the New Deal; however, this was not the case at the beginning of 1935. To be sure, it had taken him less than a year before he

concluded that the high hopes he had nursed for the Roosevelt presidency would be dashed. But for a while his stance was more that of a friendly critic than a determined foe. He would still maintain cordial relations with important administration figures, particularly those with whom he had worked in the 1934 investigation of Wall Street: Ben Cohen, Thomas Corcoran, and Ferdinand Pecora. By the middle of 1937, however, there seemed little hope that Flynn would ever be reconciled to the Roosevelt presidency, and although he would still hang on to his reputation as a liberal, he was slowly but certainly moving out of step with the mainstream definition of liberalism.³

At the beginning of 1935, Flynn offered an assessment of the New Deal that reflected his disappointment. The hated National Recovery Administration had turned out to be an “amazing flop” and had “practically collapsed.” The new laws aimed at regulating banking and the stock exchanges had been “sadly diluted.” “Achievements in social insurance . . . in dealing with our appalling corporate muddle, [and] housing” were “zero.” While he admitted that there had been something of a business revival, this was “due entirely to government spending” and hence did not qualify as genuine recovery. The one New Deal program of which he fully approved was the Tennessee Valley Authority, through which the federal government built a series of dams to provide power to parts of the rural South. Nor did Flynn expect much from the president in the coming year. Roosevelt, he predicted, “will continue to apply plasters, invisible skin, rubbing ointments, as various sore spots demand assuaging. But there is no plan.”⁴

In 1935 the Supreme Court, ruling in the case of *Schechter Poultry Company vs. United States*, declared that the National Recovery Administration was unconstitutional on the grounds that the federal government could regulate only interstate, and not intrastate, trade. For the administration, this was a serious setback, as the NRA had been the centerpiece of the New Deal’s effort to revive the economy. However, Flynn saw it as a tremendous opportunity. While he did not agree with the court’s reasoning in the case—he had long been an advocate of federal regulation of industry of all types—he had so loathed the NRA that its elimination on any grounds had to be cause for rejoicing. In an open letter to Roosevelt, he claimed that the administration should view the Court’s decision as a chance to strike out in wholly new directions. The NRA, he claimed, had been the ill-conceived product of “hysterical haste,” but by throwing his support behind maximum-hour and minimum-wage laws,

FDR could now bring about truly useful reform. “This is the moment,” he admonished the president,

for you definitely to break with these dangerous counselors of the Right and reset your course in the direction of democratic solutions. Above all, it is the moment to face the essentials in our disturbed world and set about the long, difficult, but inevitable task of more equitably distributing the income our economic system produces.⁵

For a brief moment, it appeared to Flynn that the president was taking his advice. Ever since the Congress elected in 1934 had begun its session, the president had given his backing to a whole range of progressive legislation, starting with social security. By the summer of 1935 there were bills under consideration that would guarantee labor’s right to organize and bargain collectively, eliminate public utility holding companies, and overhaul the tax system. At about the same time, he noted with satisfaction that the Securities and Exchange Commission was beginning take steps to limit speculation on Wall Street. “After twenty-seven months of the New Deal,” the journalist cheered, “we begin to get something approaching a New Deal.”⁶ Yet within a few months he would claim to be disappointed once again by Roosevelt’s willingness to strike deals and make compromises with the same big-business forces that Flynn claimed had brought about the Great Depression in the first place.

The aspect of the New Deal that Flynn most appreciated was its support for organized labor, which he believed had been sadly lacking from the NRA. The National Labor Relations Act, proposed by Senator Robert F. Wagner (Dem.-New York) in 1935, had the journalist’s support from the start. The Wagner Act banned firms from engaging in a whole variety of labor practices that were defined as unfair, such as sponsoring company unions and firing employees who attempted to join unions. Workers would be free to choose whether or not to unionize, and if they chose to do so employers would be compelled to bargain “in good faith” with union representatives. Finally, the act established an independent National Labor Relations Board with the power to enforce the bill’s provisions and mediate labor disputes.⁷

As ever concerned about the distribution of wealth in American society, Flynn urged Roosevelt to support the Wagner Act, and the president finally did so after it became clear that Congress would approve it. Moreover, the writer continued to support union activity throughout the

mid-1930s. When the Ford Motor Company refused to negotiate with the United Auto Workers in 1937, Flynn vowed never again to purchase another Ford automobile. He particularly supported the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations, which many businessmen were insisting had been infiltrated by communists. Flynn much preferred the CIO to the older, more conservative American Federation of Labor, which he claimed was filled with “racketeers.”⁸

Flynn had long been an opponent of holding companies, claiming that their only purpose was to allow unscrupulous financiers to build massive empires based on nothing more than watered-down stock. When the administration began talking about regulating holding companies, he insisted that this would not be enough—only outright abolition would do. Thus, when in 1935 the president threw his support behind the Wheeler-Rayburn Act, which would have completely eliminated any holding company engaged in the provision of public utilities that could not justify its existence on the basis of economic efficiency, Flynn was pleased. The bill, he claimed, would “bring about a rational simplicity in corporate structure,” which would furthermore serve to “eliminate the racketeering possibilities of the holding company.”⁹

The Wheeler-Rayburn Act immediately drew the furious opposition of utility executives, who referred to it as a “death sentence” and publicly expressed worries about the value of their stocks held by widows and orphans. Flynn was disgusted by what he considered self-serving rhetoric, particularly from the same group that had opposed the Tennessee Valley Authority. He noted that one of their leading voices was former Democratic presidential candidate John W. Davis, whom he denounced as “an oily, unctuous, Pecksniffian hypocrite.” He mocked the utilities’ expressions of concern for poor investors, reminding his readers that these same executives had not been overly worried about their fate when they sold them heavily inflated holding-company stocks in the 1920s—stocks that subsequently collapsed in the Wall Street crash. The sooner that the “rauding operations” of the public utility companies were brought to an end, the better off investors would be.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the public utilities’ campaign against the “death sentence” began to have an effect on Congress, and the House voted to strike the provision from the final bill. This led to a series of negotiations through the summer of 1935 between House leaders on the one hand and FDR and Senate leaders on the other. Ultimately, Felix Frankfurter brokered a deal between the two sides in which the “death sentence” would

be kept, but in order for it to apply the federal government would have to prove a particular holding company to be inefficient. For Flynn, this was one more example that the administration had sold out. He predicted that very few holding companies would be eliminated, and therefore the law would have very little effect.¹¹

But where Flynn faulted the administration most was in the area of spending and taxation. He had expressed concern as early as the spring of 1934 about Roosevelt's spending, not because he opposed public spending per se but because the money was being used as a temporary relief measure rather than being invested in areas (primarily construction) that would bring about economic recovery.¹² By the end of that year he had another worry: that too much of the New Deal was being funded through borrowing. He noted in late December that the federal government had borrowed \$11 billion since 1930, and that when these bills came due they would place a crushing burden on the next generation. Moreover, deficit spending would produce inflation, which tended to hurt the poor most. Instead of continuing to go into debt, he argued, the wealthy—"the men who usurped too large a share of the income of the American people under Coolidge"—should, through higher income taxes, be forced to bear the costs of the depression that they had done so much to bring about.¹³

It is for this reason that Flynn welcomed Roosevelt's 1935 tax proposal, which quickly came to be called the "soak-the-rich" plan. As originally proposed, it called for the institution of an income tax on corporations and a federal inheritance tax, as well as an increase in the maximum income tax rate from 59 to 79 percent. Yet, as had been the case with the Wheeler-Rayburn Act, Congress whittled the tax plan down. The proposed corporate tax rate was drastically cut, and the highest tax rates were limited to an income group so high that they would hardly affect anyone. As for the inheritance tax, it was completely eliminated. Once again, Flynn felt that the administration had let him down by not fighting harder for its original proposals. Of the final version of the tax plan he claimed, "Not in my memory has so dishonest a piece of legislation been seriously offered to the American people." At most, it would bring in an additional \$45 million in revenues, at a time when the federal government was running a deficit of \$3.5 billion. If the bill had not included so many loopholes, he insisted, it could easily produce between \$1 and \$2 billion "without depriving our industrial nobles of a single yacht."¹⁴

However, Flynn did not press this issue, mainly because by this time he had reached the conclusion that there were not enough wealthy people in the country for “soaking the rich” to bring in enough to meet the government’s spending needs. He pointed out that even if there existed a 100 percent tax on those with incomes higher than \$300,000 a year, it would still provide less than a third of what was spent in any given year. For the income tax to produce enough revenue, it would have to extend to those in the middle classes making as little as \$1,000 a year. He realized that such a course would be unpopular but argued that the alternatives—pursuing an inflationary policy, continuing to borrow, or cutting spending—were even worse. It was time that the country faced “realism in taxation.” For too long Americans had suffered from “a plague of promisers” like Roosevelt, when what the times really required was “a statesman with the courage to tell the nation plainly that it can get out of its difficulties only by making sacrifices.”¹⁵

Meanwhile, Flynn claimed, while Roosevelt was fiddling, the American economy continued to burn. The administration pointed to the falling unemployment rate, increases in production, and a revival of stock prices as evidence that the country was back on the road to prosperity. Flynn thought otherwise. In early 1935, when the White House was trumpeting the fact that retail sales in 1934 had increased to over \$28.5 billion from the previous year’s \$25 billion, he reminded his readers that money spent on relief in that same period had exploded by nearly 800 percent. In other words, the so-called recovery was built on nothing more than massive infusions of government money—“a recovery on the dole.” If the administration at any point stopped its policy of borrowing and spending, “the present business activity would crash down like a deflated balloon.” Moreover, there were other, more ominous trends. Thanks to a widespread belief that the key to reviving the economy lay in boosting prices, the president had pursued policies aimed at doing just that. Commodity prices, Flynn noted, were on the rise, some by as much as 100 percent. But such increases would ultimately be passed on to the consumer, and the resulting decline in purchasing power, he claimed, “would have the same effect as shutting down the automobile, the coal and the steel industries all at once.” Another crash was certain to come; it was only a matter of time.¹⁶

But if Flynn had little good to say about Roosevelt’s handling of the economy, this did not imply that he thought the president’s other opponents had any better ideas. He had no faith in the programs of men like

“radio priest” Father Charles Coughlin, who advocated the monetarization of silver, or Dr. Francis Townsend, who sought to create a massive pension plan for the elderly. While he admitted that Coughlin “advocates many desirable things,” such as higher wages for workers, his means of reaching these goals were tied up with his eccentric beliefs on money. If silver were monetarized, the resulting inflation would hurt precisely the people Coughlin wanted to help. As for Townsend, Flynn agreed that it was “the fundamental duty of society to provide for its aged population”; nevertheless, Townsend sought to do so through a 2 percent “transactions tax,” which would end up being passed on consumers. Ultimately, he claimed, the Townsend Plan would only further reduce purchasing power, which Flynn believed was the only true source of recovery.¹⁷

Such criticisms were mild compared to those Flynn leveled at former president Herbert Hoover, who in 1935 had begun making speeches critical of the New Deal. According to these public statements, the writer claimed, “almost everybody in the world was responsible for the depression . . . but Mr. Hoover.” While he agreed that the former president ought not bear all the blame for the 1929 crash, his “tragic ineptness” had not only failed to bring about recovery; it had actually made things worse. Flynn found particularly galling the revelation that Hoover had sent Roosevelt a letter in February 1933 calling on the president-elect to assure the American people that he would not pull the dollar off the gold standard and would balance the budget. Surely this was the “crowning affront,” as Hoover himself had at no point submitted a balanced budget to Congress when he was president.¹⁸

What was Flynn’s solution? Once again, he returned to the theme of reducing the disparities between the richest and poorest. In a commencement speech that he gave to the Connecticut College of Commerce in 1935, he spoke of the need to “subdue wealth and the income which we produce to the common good.” While he was not calling for “flat equity” in incomes, there would have to be a “reasonable proportion” between the highest and lowest. On the one hand, this meant a minimum wage that was high enough that even “the humblest task” would “bring to a man sufficient to live in decency.” On the other hand, “there must be an end to the princely rewards which a small percentage of our population has been able to squeeze out of our economic system.”¹⁹

Flynn repeatedly made it clear he was not an advocate of socialism, which, he pointed out, had never been popular among Americans, even during the worst part of the depression. He consistently claimed that his

recommendations were aimed at making capitalism work better, and, as he wrote to a friend in February 1936, this permitted him to “make attacks on the capitalist system” that no one would ever listen to if they were made by a socialist. The economy, he noted, had broken down no fewer than twenty-two times in the past eighty years, leading him to speculate that capitalism might be beyond saving. Yet the attempt must be made, if only to prevent the country from sinking “into the violent embrace of either communism or fascism.”²⁰

But, for Flynn, preserving the capitalist system would take more than passing a few simple reforms; it meant changing the culture of capitalism itself. His generation, he told the graduating seniors of the Connecticut College of Commerce, had “lived on borrowed money, borrowed ideals, borrowed philosophies. . . . We exalted cunning and thrift and filled our halls of fame with the images of our acquisitive heroes.” Most important, however, America had erred in making a fetish of private property. Thus, even though the country was involved in “a very life and death struggle” to master vast impersonal economic forces, it was “powerless” to handle the situation, thanks to “these sacred rights of property.” Flynn did not call for the abolition of such rights but insisted that they had to be subordinated to more fundamental rights, such as the life and liberty of individuals, as well as “the security of society itself.” To give the government the power to do what needed to be done, he called for three constitutional amendments: one that would give to the government “the police power over all economic matters of national importance,” and two others that would free Congress and state legislatures from “the inhibitions of the due process clause.”²¹

Of course, Franklin Roosevelt could not be expected to take such drastic measures, no matter how necessary they might be, because the president shared the same basic economic philosophy of the Republican leaders of the 1920s; just as Hoover had been called a “fat Coolidge,” Flynn wrote, FDR was merely “a smiling Hoover.” While superficially clever and a skillful politician, the president had no comprehension of the economic crisis that the country faced, and little concern for anything beyond the next election. The sooner liberals realized this, the better it would be for them, for it would not be long before the economy would sink even deeper into depression. If liberals did not distance themselves from the Democratic Party before that day came, “the whole cause of liberalism is going to suffer . . . for the failure of policies in which the liberals had absolutely no hand.”²²

One of the reasons why Roosevelt was able to maintain his reputation as a liberal was that businessmen continued to attack him, despite the fact that he had done nothing to hurt them. The constant propaganda against the New Deal that flowed from conservative organizations such as the American Liberty League left Flynn dumbfounded. He concluded that this was the work primarily of particular groups that had been singled out by New Deal programs, such as public utility executives and Wall Street speculators. Because they dominated the press, they succeeded in “dragooning” other businessmen into a war against the administration, even though the latter found themselves “a little bamboozled by the whole thing.”²³

The tactic of these businessmen that Flynn most deplored was their use of the term *communist* as a smear. He complained about “the deep-breathing and pompous chest expansion of the one-hundred percenters,” men who smacked the label “un-American” or “communistic” on “any public proposal that seems to hit some entrenched interest.” It had gotten so bad, he claimed, that one could be “nailed as a Communist” for complaining about “the service in a railroad diner.” He noted that most of the hysteria over communism came not from wealthy people themselves but rather from individuals and groups who sought to make money by playing on their fears. An “acquisitive writer,” he claimed, could do very well for himself by writing pamphlets and giving speeches warning of the “Red menace.” The favorite targets of such men were labor leaders who sought for workers nothing more than better pay, a shorter work week, and security against sickness and old age.²⁴

Flynn was particularly chagrined that his beloved Catholic Church had joined in the crusade against communism. He once wrote to Lewis Mumford that it was becoming difficult to find “a Roman Catholic who realizes he is living in this century.” Catholic priests, he wrote, were no more capable of recognizing a communist than was Elizabeth Dilling, the anti-Semitic extremist whose 1934 book *Red Network* claimed the existence of a gigantic Soviet-directed conspiracy. He called on the church hierarchy to issue a document containing “some clear and simple definitions of what communism is.” As long as the term was used to slander “anyone who criticizes the government or the system or the rich,” the church might find itself “committing some grave injustices against their fellow citizens and their country.”²⁵

All this entered into Flynn’s calculations as he looked toward the presidential campaign of 1936. He recognized early on that Roosevelt would

have no trouble in winning reelection. As he pointed out in 1935, the president had nearly \$8 billion on hand for “emergency spending purposes,” which meant that he had nearly \$800 million a month to use for the purpose of buying votes. “The New Deal may have lost its . . . philosophic virtues,” he concluded, “but it still has its money bags.” The only chance the Republicans might have would be if New York’s Tammany Democrats and some of the southerners bolted the party. Otherwise, Flynn wrote to Tom Corcoran, the Democrats were “sitting pretty.”²⁶

It had not taken Flynn long, however, to determine that he could not endorse Roosevelt in 1936 as he had four years earlier. At the same time, he could not bring himself to support Alf Landon, the candidate of the Republican Party, whose “frigid toryism” he despised. Therefore, as early as 1935 he began to call publicly for the formation of a third party. In the classic fashion of middle-class progressivism, he proposed that groups of experts—as opposed to self-interested businessmen and glad-handing politicians—be brought together to work out specific plans for economic recovery. A party could then be organized around the set of objectives that these committees had drawn up. His model for this was John Dewey’s League for Independent Political Action, which had sought to advance progressive ideas during the 1932 campaign. While it was virtually certain that Roosevelt would win, Flynn predicted that another economic collapse would take place before the end of his second term. By backing a third party in 1936, he argued, liberals and progressives could effectively distance themselves from the New Deal, thus avoiding the public opprobrium that was certain to occur when the crash took place.²⁷

By the autumn of 1936, however, it was clear that the only third party to emerge was the so-called Union Party, made up of followers of Father Coughlin, Francis Townsend, and the late Huey Long, plus a variety of political oddballs of every stripe. Flynn ignored this conglomeration altogether and ultimately decided to endorse the perennial candidate of the Socialist Party, Norman Thomas. The two had met through their mutual association with the Tamiment Institute, and while Flynn staunchly denied being a socialist, he had a tremendous amount of personal respect for Thomas. He announced his support on the radio in early October, telling his listeners that “except in matters of voice and smiles and talk,” there was “no essential difference” between Landon and Roosevelt. Of all those on the ballot, only Thomas was willing to uphold “the right of the people to rule their own economic life.”²⁸

Flynn had never seriously doubted that the president would be re-elected, and after FDR won in a landslide the only question that remained was what course he would take during his second term. Flynn considered this very issue in a couple of articles that were published before Roosevelt's second inaugural. He noted that the national mood was far different than it had been four years earlier. Then people were not only interested in recovery but also revenge—"revenge on bankers and brokers who had rooked them and on politicians who had deceived them." This spirit had allowed the president to have his way on issue after issue. But at the end of 1936, people were increasingly afraid to punish business for fear that it might impede recovery. The president, therefore, would propose no new progressive measures but might well try to revive the hated National Recovery Administration. Ultimately, though, a new economic crisis was on the horizon, and liberals would do well to sever their ties to the administration before that day came.²⁹

What Flynn never saw coming was a "great massacre of the six old men"; namely, Roosevelt's proposal to expand the Supreme Court, so that he might have an opportunity to appoint justices who were more favorable to the New Deal. Republicans, who, after the 1936 elections, constituted a very small minority in Congress, did nothing to stop it. They did not need to, as many Democrats—conservatives and liberals alike—rushed to denounce what they referred to as the president's attempt to "pack" the highest court in the land. The Senate Judiciary Committee quickly scheduled hearings on the proposal, and a number of senators pressed the committee's chairman, Montana Democrat Burton K. Wheeler, to invite Flynn to testify. Wheeler, who would emerge as one of the "Court-packing" plan's most vehement opponents, was also one of the most liberal members of the Senate. At last, Flynn rejoiced, an issue had arisen that could drive a wedge between the president and those who had so loyally supported him during his first term.³⁰

In his testimony before the Judiciary Committee, Flynn made it clear that he had little love for the present Supreme Court. While he had cheered when the Court had struck down the NRA, he had disagreed with its reasoning in *Schechter*. The present Court, he said, had ushered in "a host of bad practices under the domination of a bad social philosophy." Most of its members were former corporate lawyers, nearly all of whom had been appointed by Republicans. However, one had to distinguish between the Court as an institution and "the little men who sit on it." The Court had to remain strong and independent, so as to prevent the

other branches of government from behaving unconstitutionally. He feared in particular that behind the Court-packing plan was a campaign on Roosevelt's part to revive the NRA, and if that happened "you can kiss democracy good-bye in America."³¹

By the spring of 1937, Roosevelt's Supreme Court proposal had stalled in the Senate, where it would die an ignoble death in July. However, something very interesting happened in late March—the Court reversed itself and upheld a minimum-wage law that was practically identical to a law it had invalidated only six months earlier. Two weeks later it surprised observers again by sustaining the Wagner Act. Immediately there were charges that the Court had done so because the Court-packing plan had intimidated the justices.³² Flynn believed otherwise. He noted that up until that point the justices had defended the doctrine that manufacturing could not be regulated, as it did not qualify as interstate commerce. However, business owners had grown increasingly fearful of organized labor, which was engaged in "sit-down" strikes that paralyzed industry. "Nothing in a generation has so ruffled the tranquility of the satisfied Tory," Flynn wrote. They needed the federal government to intervene, but for it to do so they had to claim that manufacturing was, indeed, interstate commerce, and hence subject to the federal government's jurisdiction. While he appreciated the Court's reversal, he predicted that there would shortly be a demand for federal laws to ban sit-down strikes.³³

Beginning in 1937, Flynn's attitude toward FDR and the New Deal would undergo another change. While he had long been critical of the administration's efforts, he had primarily argued against them on the grounds that they were insufficient. With the exception of the NRA, which had been struck down in 1935, he had not claimed that the president's program was in any way a danger. Indeed, even during his testimony on the Court-packing plan, Flynn made a point of saying that he had no fear that Roosevelt had any intention of undermining any "great fundamental right in our system." This was significant, since many of the administration's opponents interpreted the Supreme Court proposal as a major step on the road to dictatorship.³⁴

Nevertheless, three years later Flynn would be attacking the administration not for its impotence but rather for the threat that it posed to the republic. He would derive this argument as much from the president's conduct of foreign affairs as from his economic policies, ultimately reaching the conclusion that Roosevelt, in an effort to solve the

nation's economic problems, was planning to involve the country in a war. Yet, as his criticism of the president grew more strident, he found himself increasingly isolated from the liberal mainstream. It seemed that the very definition of liberalism was changing, and Flynn was being left behind.

A Great and Grand Guy—Once

In the late 1930s, John T. Flynn was at the height of his career as a liberal journalist. His articles were appearing in virtually every important political journal in the country, and through his newspaper column and radio broadcasts his words were reaching an audience that numbered in the millions. Moreover, he was being better compensated for his work than ever before. In an age when the median family income was well under \$5,000, Flynn was making about \$26,000, over a third of which came from his newspaper column.¹

However, it was also during this period that Flynn's reputation as a liberal began to be seriously questioned. His criticisms of Franklin Roosevelt were becoming so strident that he gradually became a pariah among liberals. This is not to say that he embraced the president's conservative opponents; on the contrary, he continued to view the Republican Party as offering no constructive alternative to the New Deal. As a result, he found himself increasingly cut off from traditional affiliations, and his journalistic career would suffer as a result.

As seen in the previous chapter, Roosevelt's second term did not begin well, as his proposal to add new justices to the Supreme Court ran into a wall of opposition in the Senate. The president's luck did not improve much as the year went on. That summer, in an effort to balance the federal budget, he ordered significant cuts in spending on work relief and other programs. That autumn saw a collapse in stock prices that was eerily reminiscent of 1929, with investors dumping 17 million shares in a single day. Within a few weeks people were talking about a "Roosevelt recession," and the president's popularity reached unprecedented lows.

It would be unfair to claim that Flynn rejoiced in the administration's woes; nevertheless, he interpreted the sequence of events as a complete vindication of what he had been writing for months. Most of the money that had been flowing into securities markets since 1933 had come from

government, at the federal, state, and local levels. Private investment, he noted, was “almost negligible.” This meant that the economic recovery of which the president had been boasting was wholly illusory, based on nothing more than federal spending. Now that spending was being cut, the economy was merely “paying the inevitable price—which is collapse.”²

There were alternative theories in circulation regarding the cause of the recession, but Flynn regarded them with scorn. For example, he noted that the “propagandists of Wall Street” were claiming that SEC regulation triggered the fall in stock prices. He dismissed this as the self-interested posturing of the “Old Guard that ruled the exchange” and had spent the last several years “hoping for the return of the old days and consuming itself in hatred.” In fact, he claimed that the “wanton, furious and utterly unfounded attacks” made by conservatives against the New Deal had actually hindered recovery. Of course, he wrote, there was much to criticize in the administration’s policy. But the right-wing effort “to paint Roosevelt as a Communist plotting to overthrow the capitalist system” was not only untrue but had the effect of frightening potential investors away from productive economic endeavors.³

But Flynn had no sympathy for the White House’s explanations either. For example, he pointed to the president’s claim that the slowdown was the product of “monopoly price-fixing” as “sheer, unmixed brass.” After all, he wrote to Senator Arthur Vandenberg (Rep.-Michigan), the administration had done nothing but encourage this sort of behavior ever since the earliest days of the New Deal. He found equally ridiculous the argument that bankers were deliberately withholding their capital in an effort to discredit Roosevelt’s economic policies. No matter how much the banking community might dislike the president, it was inconceivable that they would sacrifice their own enterprises in an attempt to humiliate him.⁴

If the situation were to be restored, Flynn claimed, drastic action was necessary. First of all, the president would have to stop relying on “propagandists” and “Wall Street economists” and instead call in a team made up of the most distinguished academic economists in the country. This group, working “as objective scientists,” would then offer prescriptions on how to make the capitalist system work.⁵ Second, the administration should abandon “every vestige of the NRA theory of trade control over industry.” The NRA might have been eliminated, but Flynn was convinced that Roosevelt was looking for some way to reconstitute it; as

he wrote to veteran New Dealer Leon Henderson, there were “a lot of boys in the administration who would like to get this poisonous thing called self-rule in industry started under some pretty name” such as “national planning.” Planning was indeed necessary, Flynn insisted, but this should not be confused with “fixing prices for steel-mongers and pants pressers, in licensing grocers or creating scarcity by proclamation.”⁶

Most important, however, there would have to be significant income redistribution through the tax code. The tax system, he claimed, relied too much on excise taxes that fell disproportionately on the poor, and not enough on the progressive income tax. As a result, money was flowing into the hands of the wealthy, who were unwilling to invest it, and out of the hands of ordinary consumers, whose spending might be expected to revive the economy. Redistribution therefore was “not merely the dream of the sentimental lover of his species who wants to soak the rich to help the poor. It is an act of economic intelligence to keep in order the whole machine which feeds both the rich and the poor.”⁷

None of this, of course, was new; Flynn had been offering these prescriptions since the early 1930s. However, there was one element in his analysis that was different. He had long considered himself a defender of big business, adhering to the standard view of middle-class progressivism, which held that large corporations tended to bring an element of stability to an otherwise chaotic economy. But by the late 1930s he was beginning to sound a more pessimistic note, suggesting that, thanks to the current laws of incorporation, businesses had grown so large that they actually served as barriers to recovery. Under capitalism, he claimed, it should be possible for “the general manager of a plant, who has saved his earnings and who is ambitious, to start a plant of his own.” Yet in most industries this had become impossible, since large-scale enterprises had tax and regulatory advantages not available to smaller competitors. Moreover, this “artificial pressure to create bigness” put the larger economy at risk. As he put it in a letter to Leon Henderson, “If, instead of eight large steel producers, we had 300 (there were over 300 corporations merged in U.S. Steel) then when business drops off instead of a general shutting down we would have a number of them still operating and adjusting prices to the declining demand.”⁸

For this reason he praised Roosevelt’s new assistant attorney general, Thurman Arnold, for cracking down on anticompetitive practices. He lamented that labor unions and chambers of commerce alike had taken to glorifying “bigness” while viewing antitrust laws as relics of “the

horse-and-buggy age.” In fact, at times he seemed to want to go even further than the current laws required. Testifying before the Temporary National Economic Committee in March 1939, he recommended the enactment of legislation prohibiting any given corporation from engaging in more than one function. If capitalism could not be rearranged “on a functional basis,” he told the committee, “capitalism is doomed.”⁹

In fact, by 1939, Flynn was expressing “a certain lack of confidence in the possibility of preserving the system.” It was not that he believed the system *per se* was unreformable; he was too much the progressive for that. Indeed, he liked to point out that he had been identifying abuses in the system for ten years, yet nothing had been done to remove them. The problem was that so many powerful interests had a stake in seeing to it that the abuses remained in place. Since neither capital nor labor would allow real reform to occur, he could only conclude that capitalism itself was “in at least some stage of disintegration.” Nevertheless, he would continue to fight to prolong the “capitalist interlude,” he wrote in the *New Republic*, but only because he feared that the system’s complete collapse would open the door to fascism.¹⁰

Flynn had, in fact, come to see the New Deal as just one stage in the “degeneration” of capitalism, not in itself fascist but bearing certain resemblances to fascism and helping to pave the way for it in the future. The administration’s deficit spending particularly alarmed him. He noted that during the 1932 election campaign Roosevelt had denounced Hoover for running up the deficit by spending \$15 million on various building projects; now, he noted, the president was spending that much borrowed money every two days. Hitler, he pointed out, was doing the same thing in Germany. Again, the writer did not object to government spending to assist the unemployed and the needy, but he feared that the practice of “pump priming” was making the economy dangerously dependent on infusions of borrowed money. Mass inflation, he claimed, would be the inevitable result.¹¹

Moreover, in the late 1930s certain economists associated with the administration, such as David Cushman Coyle and Alvin Hansen, had begun to defend the pump-priming practice openly. Coyle, for example, claimed that there was not really any such thing as a federal deficit, since the United States was borrowing the money from itself. Flynn objected to this characterization, responding that Coyle failed “to distinguish between the United States Government and the United States.” When the federal government borrowed money to build things such as public

schools, roads, parks, and soil conservation projects, it was creating assets that belonged to specific localities, and not to the government in Washington.¹²

Flynn was also becoming worried about a federal program that he had staunchly supported earlier in the decade—social security. He had no objection on principle to the system of pensions for the elderly, which he still called “a great experiment in human decency.” However, the social security system was drawing in far more in payroll taxes than necessary to fund the program, which was not slated to begin paying benefits until 1942—and which even then would not be paying more than seventeen dollars per month. The theory behind this was that by collecting more up front and investing the surplus in government bonds, there would be created a “reserve” large enough to meet the needs of generations of future workers upon retirement. In a 1938 article in *Harper’s*, Flynn called this a “swindle” that would never be tolerated if carried out by a private insurance company. When the government “invested” in treasury bonds, he informed his readers, it was merely borrowing from the reserve to fund other projects. He estimated that by 1980 the system would have taken in \$111 billion in payroll taxes and paid out \$64 billion in benefits. What would be left in the reserve would be nothing but government IOUs, or what he called “phantom dollars.” Eventually, he predicted, other taxes would have to be increased in order to pay the interest accruing on those IOUs, and these taxes would fall most heavily on the same lower-income groups that social security was supposed to benefit most. The reserve, he concluded, was “the most monstrous device in government finance anywhere, with the possible exception of Germany and Italy.”¹³

Rather than attempting to amass a fictional reserve, Flynn favored moving toward a “pay as you go” plan for old-age pensions. He called for a dramatic reduction in the payroll tax, from 2 percent on employers and employees to 0.25 percent. This would then be increased as necessary to accommodate the needs of the plan. Testifying before the House Ways and Means Committee in 1939, he told legislators that it was ultimately “a moral question. . . . It is not right to impose a tax for old-age pensions which will produce revenue which will never be used for old-age pensions, but will be used over a long period of time for paying the general expenses of Government, and which the Government will never pay back to the Social Security Board.”¹⁴

Yet, by the end of 1937, Flynn was certain of one thing: the New Deal was over. The recession, he claimed, had pushed the president even fur-

ther to the right in response to the criticism of businessmen who blamed the slowdown on taxes and regulation. He had therefore declared an “armistice” with big business, which meant that “every step the administration now takes to deal with any abuse will be denounced as a violation of the armistice and retreat from appeasement.” Although the president’s new Secretary of Commerce, Harry Hopkins, was widely believed to be a liberal, Flynn claimed that the Commerce Department was swarming with “economic royalists.” Roosevelt, he wrote in the *New Republic*, was “getting ready to bring it [the New Deal] to an end with one of those great musical-comedy finales when everybody is getting married to somebody.” All that was needed to make it complete was “music by Gilbert and Sullivan.”¹⁵

In November 1938, Flynn offered his postmortem on the New Deal. It was not without significant accomplishments, he admitted. He praised without reservations the National Labor Relations Act, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Fair Labor Standards Act, which had established a national minimum wage. And while he believed that the Securities Exchange Act and the Utility Holding Company Act should have been stronger, he still applauded them as helpful measures. And even the Social Security Act, though it was “just about as bad as a social-security law can well be,” was better than nothing. But for Flynn the true legacy of the New Deal was far more sinister: a partnership among large corporations, labor unions, and the federal government that had been sold to Americans under the brand name of “liberalism.” The NRA had been one manifestation of this; the administration’s ongoing military spending and “jingoistic nonsense” was another. The government, he feared, had ceased to serve as an impartial referee, seeking to eliminate abuses and injustices wherever they appeared; it was now acting to harmonize the interests of powerful pressure groups, most importantly business and labor. All this, he believed, was eerily similar to what Mussolini and Hitler were attempting to do in their countries.¹⁶

Yet, while Flynn was making such criticisms, something extraordinary was taking place. His public reputation as a liberal was giving way to the notion that he was a conservative. By preferring capitalism to fascism, he was unwittingly beginning to portray himself as a defender of the old order. By opposing deficit spending, he was being dismissed as an advocate of economic orthodoxy. “I have heard a lot of fuzzy yapping about this thing called orthodox economics,” he wrote in 1940. “It comes usually from litterateurs and poetasters who study their economics looking

out the window at the moon and visiting the slums.” If one was dedicated to preserving capitalism, he claimed, one had to “take the inescapable laws which go with that system in which the dynamic power is credit and private investment.” To many liberals, Flynn sounded a lot less like Norman Thomas and a lot more like a Liberty Leaguer.¹⁷

The extent to which Flynn was being associated with conservative critics of the administration may be seen in an incident that occurred in late 1939. Earlier that year Raymond Moley published an insider’s account of the Roosevelt White House entitled *After Seven Years*. Moley, a law professor at Columbia University, had been one of FDR’s closest advisers in the early years of the New Deal, serving as assistant secretary of state. However, by the mid-1930s he had become disillusioned and distanced himself from the administration, and his 1939 book suggested that when it came to economic affairs, the president was an uneducated dilettante. Particularly damning was his overall assessment of the New Deal: “To look upon these policies as the result of a unified plan was to believe that the accumulation of stuffed snakes, baseball pictures, school flags, old tennis shoes, carpenter’s tools, geometry books, and chemistry sets in a boy’s bedroom could have been put there by an interior decorator.”¹⁸

Not surprisingly, Flynn very much enjoyed *After Seven Years*, as it seemed to confirm many of the suspicions that the writer had of the president. However, Roosevelt himself was mortified by the book, and he struck back by telling a few of his favorites in the White House press corps that he had received a long letter from former president Herbert Hoover criticizing Moley’s account. Much of the book dealt with the final months of the Hoover presidency and the four-month interregnum between the 1932 election and Roosevelt’s inaugural. FDR claimed that his predecessor had identified no fewer than twenty-two errors in these sections, and that furthermore he had called upon the president to set the record straight. Soon the story of Hoover’s personal message to Roosevelt had appeared in a number of media outlets, including *Life* magazine, Walter Winchell’s radio program, and the influential political column “Washington Merry-Go-Round,” written by Robert S. Allen and Drew Pearson.¹⁹

Flynn had long been on good terms with both Allen and Pearson, but particularly with the latter, who, Flynn claimed, “got his first lessons in journalism under me.” But by this time he had become convinced that his former pupil had become a shill for the administration; while “naturally” a good reporter, he had joined “a cabal to publicize the Roosevelt propa-

ganda.” Moreover, he told Senator Burton K. Wheeler (Dem.-Montana), Pearson and Allen were using their column “to strike at the personal enemies of Franklin Roosevelt.” Flynn believed that what Pearson needed was “a good, strong, heart-to-heart lecture” on journalism.²⁰

In November, Flynn believed he had an opportunity to deliver that lecture. He received word from an unnamed source that Hoover had denied ever complaining to Roosevelt about Moley’s book, and that the former president had sent a letter to *Life* magazine to that effect. Flynn, eager to show that FDR had given false information to his friends in the press, immediately published this fact in his newspaper column—and it ran even before Hoover’s letter to *Life* did.

The result was an angry exchange of correspondence between Flynn and the writers of “Washington Merry-Go-Round.” It began with a fiery missive from Allen, who accused Flynn of “doing a meat-axing job for . . . Hoover and Moley.” Two days later Pearson sent his own letter, one that cited a meeting between Hoover and a group of California journalists, in which the former president publicly took issue with Moley’s disclosures. By failing to mention this, Pearson claimed, his former mentor had “become a Hoover propagandist.”²¹

Flynn was not the sort of man to take such accusations lightly, and he fired back a series of letters in which he called Allen “a God-damn liar” and told Pearson that he “ought to be a little ashamed.” He denied having any particular fondness for the former president; indeed, he insisted that he had “no respect for either the White House or Hoover.” It was entirely possible, he admitted, that the latter was lying when he claimed that he had never complained about Moley’s book. All he had done was to report “a fact which it seems to me was worth reporting—that Hoover had written a letter to *Life* denying the story.” Whether or not this was true was another question entirely.²²

Allen and Pearson remained unconvinced. For them, the very fact that Flynn had learned of the letter to *Life* before it had appeared in that publication suggested that he was receiving “some sort of inside information from Hoover or the Hoover camp.” It was sad, Pearson wrote, that “the top economic writer in the U.S.A.” was rushing to the defense of a reactionary like the former president. Allen was even more forceful. “For many, many years you were my model for journalistic integrity, courage, and straight thinking,” he wrote. “If you want to bed with Hoover, Moley and other bastards, that’s your privilege. But you sure were a great and grand guy—once.”²³

Flynn's falling out with two of the country's best-known journalists was just the beginning of the writer's growing estrangement from the liberal establishment. In April 1939 he had been quietly dropped as a contributor to *Common Sense*. The most ominous sign, however, was one of which Flynn himself remained unaware until years later. The president himself wrote a letter in the summer of 1939 to the editor of the *Yale Review*, which had recently published an article by Flynn. "I have watched John T. Flynn during these many years," Roosevelt wrote,

and the net answer in my mind is that he has always, with practically no exception, been a destructive rather than a constructive force. Therefore, Q.E.D., John T. Flynn should be barred hereafter from the columns of any presentable daily paper, monthly magazine or national quarterly, such as the *Yale Review*.

The *Review*'s editor, Wilbur Cross, responded by giving his assurances that no article by Flynn would ever appear in the magazine as long as Cross was associated with it.²⁴

The *Yale Review* hardly represented a wide portion of the publishing industry, and indeed, the president's dislike for Flynn did not stop the publication of the latter's book *Country Squire in the White House* by Doubleday, Doran in 1940. The book went on sale in July of that year, the very same month in which the Democratic Party nominated Roosevelt to a third term. With a list price of only one dollar, more than one hundred thousand were sold before the election, making it the fourth-best-selling nonfiction book of 1940.²⁵

Country Squire in the White House was a brief book—a mere 122 pages—that summarized everything Flynn had been saying about the president in the past seven years. The picture of Roosevelt that emerged was that of a Hudson Valley aristocrat, possessed of a paternalistic concern for common people but with neither the intellectual ability nor the temperament to devise a program appropriate for meeting the problems of the day. As a result, the New Deal was a strange blend of the president's priorities—defense spending plus a few genuinely well-intentioned measures such as social security—and those of the big-business "reactionaries" who surrounded him. Roosevelt had managed to entrench himself in the White House by borrowing and spending billions of dollars but had proved unable to bring about economic recovery. Now he could save his presidency only by promoting war hysteria.²⁶

Flynn claimed that he had never intended the book as a piece of campaign literature, but given the timing of its release it was quickly received as such. Hamilton Basso, reviewing it in the *New Republic*, called it “as severe an indictment of Franklin D. Roosevelt as has ever been written.” The *New York Times* claimed that because the book never displayed “a too obvious hate,” it was more devastating to the president’s reputation “than all of the hundreds of venomous, and usually anonymous, pamphlets and broadsides attacking him put together.” Certainly, those with any reason for opposing Roosevelt considered *Country Squire in the White House* a godsend; although Flynn had little favorable to say about the Republican opposition, the GOP purchased and distributed the book in large quantities. Those who, like Flynn, opposed foreign intervention praised it enthusiastically, and in October it was serialized in the militantly anti-FDR *Chicago Tribune*. No wonder that it became the author’s first literary blockbuster, netting him more than \$11,000 in royalties in its first year of publication.²⁷

Unfortunately, although Flynn did not realize this at the time, the book also attracted support from less savory quarters. In the 1950s, captured German documents revealed that Hitler’s government had conducted an underground campaign to support anti-interventionism in the United States. One means by which they did so was to promote “to the greatest possible extent” books “attacking Roosevelt and seeking to forward American neutrality.” The German ambassador Hans Thomsen received money from Berlin to purchase fifty thousand copies of *Country Squire in the White House* (that is, roughly half of its sales in the first six months of publication). These were then distributed during the 1940 campaign “by trusted intermediaries . . . carefully camouflaged to conceal the German hand.”²⁸

Flynn originally approached the 1940 elections much as he had those of 1936, believing that neither party was worth supporting. The Democrats had no ideas aside from more and more deficit spending, while the Republicans only talked about cutting spending and balancing the budget. Both of them, he wrote in April 1939, had “practically abdicated all effort to make our dilapidated economic system work.”²⁹

But as the primary season got underway, Flynn decided to take a closer look at some of the Republicans who were seeking the presidency. He conceded that New York’s young district attorney, Thomas E. Dewey, had the “glamour vote” but claimed he had little else going for him. He dismissed Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio, the favorite of conservatives, as

“frightfully inadequate” and a “reactionary.” He reached the conclusion that none of the Republican hopefuls “had any real program” but nevertheless began to lean toward Arthur Vandenberg, who had earlier served on the Nye Committee. When the Michigan senator entered the Wisconsin primary, Flynn gave him his endorsement, although not without reservations—he noted that as a newspaper editor in Grand Rapids, Vandenberg had expressed support for American possession of the Philippines and involvement in the League of Nations.³⁰

In the wake of the two parties’ national conventions, Flynn found himself in a quandary. Certainly he would never support Roosevelt, who was now running for an unprecedented third term and apparently “making a career of the presidency.” Nevertheless, he had no enthusiasm for the Republican nominee, Wendell Willkie of Indiana, and he turned down a request by his friend Oswald Garrison Villard to endorse him. Willkie, as a lawyer for a large power corporation, had led the fight in 1935 against the Wheeler-Rayburn Act, which Flynn had supported. Even more important, on the crucial issue of foreign policy Willkie remained vague. Therefore, the writer claimed, there was little difference between the two parties: “One candidate will say business ought to be freed and will free it,” he wrote. “Another will say business must be curbed and will free it.”³¹

Still, Flynn decided he could not remain completely aloof from politics; as he wrote to Villard, “I would be against Christ himself if he were running for a third term.” He therefore decided to make a radio address in which he asked the public not to vote for Roosevelt, but he did so without ever mentioning the Republican candidate. He gave his talk—sponsored by American Writers for Wendell L. Willkie—on NBC’s Red Network during the week before Election Day, and his tone was characteristically grave. He noted that the president had promised not to send American boys off to war but reminded his audience that back in 1932 he had promised to balance the budget. But it was at the end of his speech that the tone grew darkest:

[I]f next Tuesday you re-elect the President and the war drums should beat and your son should be marched off to the transports and find himself in a grave in some distant land . . . fighting to save the colonial possessions of some European empire—do not blame Franklin Roosevelt for it. The blame will be upon your own heads. The blood of your sons will be not merely on his, but on your own hands.³²

Apparently, this was a risk that the voters were prepared to take, for Roosevelt won a commanding victory. Flynn claimed not to be surprised, for the Republicans had failed to offer the electorate any real alternative to either the New Deal's domestic agenda or its foreign policy. The president also had the advantage of his "immense spending fund" that could be counted on to keep crucial constituencies in line. Finally, Roosevelt had won because he played on the fears of the voters, convincing them that Hitler's Germany was bent on attacking the United States. "Once that idea became lodged in their minds," he wrote to Alf Landon, "Willkie was a beaten man."³³

The fact that Flynn assisted the Willkie campaign—even if he never actually endorsed the Republican candidate—dealt yet another blow to the writer's reputation as a liberal. Moreover, by the summer of 1940 his politics were causing a growing rift between him and Bruce Bliven, his boss at the *New Republic*—so much so that the latter increasingly saw fit to challenge Flynn's assertions in the magazine's pages. For example, in response to several readers angry over the writer's criticisms of Roosevelt, Bliven wrote in the July 29 edition that Flynn's dislike of the president "sometimes warps his ordinarily good judgment about other men and measures." However, at this point he still defended the author of "Other People's Money," insisting that "he will be found fighting to the last gasp for progressive causes as he understands them."³⁴

Nevertheless, in the very next issue Bliven began including a disclaimer at the end of each of Flynn's columns, informing readers that "Other People's Money" was included "for its intrinsic interest and not because the editors see eye to eye with him. We dissent strongly from many of his views." Elsewhere the editor wrote that when it came to deficit spending, Flynn was "as orthodox as the economists of Wall Street."³⁵

The dispute between Flynn and Bliven caught the attention of several of the *New Republic*'s readers, some of whom wrote to praise the writer and others to damn him. For example, one Russell Williams of Monterey, California, called him "the one remaining clear eye" at the magazine, while Ray Hanna of New York City wrote to inform the editors that *Country Squire in the White House* was the most talked-about recent book at the headquarters of the local Republican Club. When Bliven informed Flynn that some readers were canceling their subscriptions over the writer's apparent hostility to Roosevelt, Flynn could no longer remain silent. "One of the things I cannot understand," he wrote,

is that a liberal writer who is saying now the same thing he said five years ago and ten years ago, who is opposed to third terms for presidents, to war-mongering and militarism and conscription and corrupt political machines and vast public debt, . . . should be accused of holding these views because of a personal feeling against the President. I held these views before Roosevelt was President and I have now lost my liberal credentials because I do not agree with the *New York Times*, the *Herald-Tribune*, [Secretary of War] Mr. Harry Stimson, Mr. Franklin Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie about the war.³⁶

Bliven chose to wait until after the November election to take decisive action. After conferring with fellow editor George Soule, he informed Flynn that they were “convinced that you have lost a good deal of your interest in the subject of your column.” He reminded the writer that although he had been hired to write about abuses on Wall Street, only three of his last thirteen articles had dealt with that topic, the others covering matters that were “outside the scope of your department.” As long as Flynn stuck to “Wall Street, the safety of investments and allied subjects,” the letter promised, the *New Republic* would continue to print his columns “as often as you care to write them.” However, submissions on other subjects would be treated as letters to the editor; he would not be paid for them, and there was no guarantee that they would appear in print, “since this space is limited and badly overcrowded.” “It is our strong feeling,” Bliven concluded, “that it is you who have changed and not the paper.”³⁷

At this point the days of “Other People’s Money” were clearly numbered. Bliven tried suggesting a few topics for Flynn’s column, but the latter disregarded them, refusing to “confine myself to the territory between Fulton Street and the Battery and our two rivers.” In the November 18 edition the ax finally fell, with an announcement from the editorial board that the column would no longer appear. “Lacking sufficient material for a weekly column on the original subject,” it read, “Mr. Flynn has ranged far afield and has frequently collided head-on with the views of the editors.” The announcement went on to express hope that the writer would continue to contribute articles to the *New Republic*, but only if they dealt with “his original theme.”³⁸

Flynn’s firing caused a mixed reaction, one that illustrates the division in liberal thought on the subject of Roosevelt’s foreign policy. Readers sent impassioned letters on both sides of the issue. Meanwhile, Flynn’s

supporters sent messages of condolence. John Haynes Holmes, pacifist and founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, claimed in a letter to Bliven that the author of “Other People’s Money” was “the only clear eye and understanding mind in your paper,” comparing his work to that of the radical antiwar activist Randolph Bourne during World War I. Writing to Flynn personally, he called the firing “grievous news—not so much for you as for the New Republic.” Reflecting on the fate of other antiwar liberals at the time—Oswald Garrison Villard had recently been fired from *The Nation*, while Harry Elmer Barnes lost his column in the Scripps-Howard newspapers—he lamented the “low degraded estate” to which “liberal journalism in this country” had fallen. The *New Republic*’s treasurer, Daniel Mebane, confided that with Flynn’s dismissal the magazine could no longer rightly call itself “liberal.” Only H. L. Mencken expressed satisfaction, congratulating Flynn for “clearing out of that drug-store atmosphere” and denouncing Bliven as “a shabby fellow.”³⁹

In early February 1941, Bliven gave Flynn a final opportunity to give his side of the story. His view of the New Deal, Flynn argued, had been fully in line with that of the editorial staff throughout the 1930s. The difference of opinion was over foreign policy, on which the *New Republic* “has not merely changed its view but has made a complete and sudden somersault on the subject.” The magazine had traditionally opposed military spending and foreign intervention; indeed, it had fully supported the work of the Nye Committee, and Bliven himself had been a founding member of the Keep America Out of War Congress. For reasons that were unclear, however, the editors had swallowed “hook, line and sinker the program of the war party,” and in the process had left Flynn “high and dry.”⁴⁰

Bliven responded by acknowledging the editorial change on foreign policy, attributing it to the defeat of France in the spring. “We do not see how anyone with eyes in his head can dispute the fact that Hitler is a menace to this country,” he added. But he denied Flynn’s claim that they were in agreement when it came to the New Deal. The *New Republic*, he reminded readers, had endorsed Roosevelt both in 1936 and in 1940, while Flynn “gave Mr. Willkie effective aid.” Previously, Bliven concluded, “he seemed to us a man determined that we should have a free, safe, and democratic America. Today, he prefers the America of Mr. Willkie and, by reasonable parallel, the America of Mr. Hoover, to that of the New Deal.”⁴¹

Thus Flynn's relationship with the *New Republic*, the paragon of American liberal journalism in the 1930s, came to an end. Flynn and his defenders, then and later, would cite this as a prime example of a general "muzzling" of anti-interventionist viewpoints during the months before Pearl Harbor. The later revelation that Roosevelt himself had written to protest Flynn's publication in the *Yale Review* added fuel to the fire, suggesting a vast administration conspiracy to silence dissent.⁴²

Such claims are overwrought. As Bliven pointed out at the time, Flynn had not been muzzled; there were, in fact, plenty of outlets for his opinions. At the end of 1940 he still had a daily newspaper column and articles regularly appearing in *Collier's* and other national magazines, in addition to frequent lecture and radio appearances.⁴³ If he published far less in 1941 than in recent years, this was surely attributable to his heavy involvement in the anti-interventionist movement; his chairmanship of the New York City chapter of the America First Committee, by his own admission, consumed most of his time. As for administration involvement, while it was true that the president intervened with the editor of the *Yale Review*, there is no evidence whatsoever that he was involved in Flynn's firing from the *New Republic*; indeed, it is reasonable to assume that Roosevelt, as a Yale alumnus, took a special interest in his alma mater's magazine.

There was, however, probably more to the *New Republic* dismissal than Bliven let on, either at the time or in his 1970 autobiography.⁴⁴ The impetus likely came not from the White House but from the magazine's chief financial backer, Dorothy Straight. In 1925, Straight had married a wealthy Englishman named Leonard Elmhirst, and while the couple had generally let the editors formulate their own policy, by 1940 they had begun to pressure Bliven about the magazine's anti-interventionist slant. Thanks to this pressure Bliven also hired Dorothy's son Willard as chief Washington editor and fired film and music critic Otis Ferguson, "TRB" columnist Jonathan Mitchel (who, like Flynn, was a critic of Roosevelt's foreign policy), and even Edmund Wilson, who had been literary editor since the 1920s. In short, there is considerable substance to Flynn's claim that it was the *New Republic*, and not he, that had changed.⁴⁵

Whatever the reason, Flynn's break with Bliven and the *New Republic* marks a turning point of sorts in the writer's career. While there is no evidence that his views on politics or economics had changed in any fundamental way, his departure from the country's leading liberal magazine made it difficult for him to sustain his reputation as a liberal journalist.

At the same time, his increasing commitment to the anti-interventionist movement—which by 1941 had taken on a distinctly conservative tone—would lead to suggestions that he had abandoned liberalism altogether. Indeed, Flynn’s opposition to American involvement in World War II would place him for the first time in his life in conservative circles. And while this would generate considerable discomfort at first, the contacts he would make in the next couple of years would be instrumental in bringing about his apparent “conversion” to the right.

A Very Responsible Committee

As seen in Chapter 4, by the early 1930s, Flynn had concluded that the United States had been drawn into the First World War due to the machinations of American bankers and arms merchants. By the middle years of the decade, he further became convinced that Franklin Roosevelt was set on involving the country in another war, this time in the hope of propping up a sagging economy through massive public expenditures on arms and other war matériel. Both concerns became paramount in his mind in September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland and war broke out between the Germans on the one hand and Britain and France on the other. Over the course of the next year, Flynn's commentary on domestic affairs increasingly took a backseat to his views on foreign policy, so that by 1941 he had gained a reputation as one of the country's leading anti-interventionists.

The outbreak of the European war did not pass without comment by Flynn. In "Other People's Money" he assured his readers that, as awful as Hitler's regime was, the conflict could hardly be portrayed as a simple morality play. He reminded his audience that just the year before "good old Neville went to Munich and literally opened the door to Hitler to move east." Nor was Poland an innocent victim of German aggression—in the wake of the Munich agreement, he wrote, the Poles were "the first of the vultures to swoop down upon the disintegrating carcass" of Czechoslovakia by seizing the city of Teschen. All this was important to remember, Flynn insisted, since the country was certain to find itself bombarded with "misinformation, propaganda," and "emotional lashing."¹

It was precisely to combat such "emotional lashing" that Flynn assisted in the publication of *Uncensored*, the premier issue of which appeared that same month. *Uncensored* was a weekly newsletter aimed at exposing "propaganda" designed to lure the nation into war. Aside from Flynn, the publication's list of editorial sponsors included leading liberals

such as Harry Elmer Barnes, Stuart Chase, Marquis Childs, C. Hartley Grattan, Quincy Howe, George R. Leighton, Ferdinand Lundberg, Selden Rodman, and Oswald Garrison Villard. Its editor was Cushman Reynolds, and although most of the articles that appeared in *Uncensored* were unsigned, it is likely that Flynn contributed at least occasionally to its pages during its run, which terminated in December 1941.²

One of the first steps the Roosevelt administration took in response to the European crisis was to advocate repeal of the neutrality laws so as to allow arms sales to the Allies. When this ran into heavy opposition from Congress, however, the president softened his request, calling instead for arms sales on a “cash-and-carry” basis. That is, Britain and France would be able to purchase arms and other war matériel in the United States, but only if they paid up front in gold and transported the items home in their own ships. Roosevelt portrayed this as a measure designed to assist European democracy, but Flynn believed otherwise. The only democracy he was really interested in helping, the writer claimed, was the Democratic Party. “Men will be at work, they think, and, in order to create the illusion of American unity before the world, we shall be asked not to discuss our own grave economic problems.”³

Despite a vigorous campaign by the Keep America Out of War Congress and other anti-interventionist organizations, Congress ultimately approved the president’s request to repeal the arms embargo. However, Flynn did not view this as a serious defeat. Praising the “neutrality bloc” for its spirited fight, he told the governing committee of the KAOWC that had it not been for their efforts, Roosevelt would have scrapped the neutrality laws altogether. Obviously the organization’s leaders appreciated Flynn’s own part in that fight—in early November he was appointed national chairman, a position he would hold until the middle of 1941.⁴

For Flynn, the fight over repeal of the arms embargo revealed a powerful new alignment in American politics. For the first time, “unquestioned liberal idealists” such as his friend Lewis Mumford were joining forces with “old-time Republican reactionaries, professional militarists and political junkers” to demand increased spending on armaments. He had long accused the New Deal of being a form of conservatism dressed up as liberalism; now the administration’s policy was to use the military as a substitute for the sort of public works projects that conservatives had long complained about. The Right, Flynn wrote, had traditionally supported large armies and navies, and now to find liberals backing the same policy was “gravely upsetting.” He noted at the end of 1939 that

the defense budget for 1940 was nearly twice that of the previous year. He warned that arms expenditures were in fact part of FDR's "permanent policy," a means of keeping the economy afloat now that the rest of the New Deal had collapsed. The only essential difference between Roosevelt and the Liberty League now, he argued, was that the president believed in deficit financing while the latter did not.⁵

More frightening than the arms expenditures themselves were the administration's attempts to win support for them through the promotion of war scares. The president spoke of German penetration of South America, Nazi spies operating in the United States, submarines prowling off the East Coast, and even the possibility of a German invasion. "We have a war party here," Flynn said at a KAOWC rally in January 1940, "and the leader of that party is the President of the United States."⁶

Flynn's accusations that the president was engaged in creating "war emergencies" reflected his own view that, as morally abhorrent as Nazi Germany was, its armed forces posed no threat to the United States. As early as September 1938 he was predicting that Hitler's regime lacked the raw materials to sustain a war for more than a few months, but even after this proved false, he continued arguing along essentially the same lines. The Norwegian campaign in the spring of 1940 was for him evidence that Germany could never mount a successful invasion of the Western Hemisphere; after all, neither the Germans nor the British proved able to send more than "a couple thousand soldiers" to Oslo. Five months later, when France and the Low Countries were under German control and England stood alone against Hitler, he referred to a possible invasion as an "enterprise too fantastic for the consideration, even for a moment, of men who are not insane."⁷

In fact, even in mid-1941, when Nazi Germany was at the height of its power, Flynn argued that Hitler's empire was doomed. There was, he wrote, nothing new or dynamic about the Nazi economic system; it was simply an old-fashioned tyranny—"a desperate struggle to keep alive the crippled capitalist economy of Germany." Most of Hitler's conquests, Flynn predicted, would be economic liabilities. Victory would leave the Third Reich militarily powerful but with crippling debts, a stagnant economy, and a population on the verge of starvation. Hitler would be so desperate to sell the raw materials that his conquests brought him that his empire would become dangerously dependent on trade with America. Even cheap labor from conquered nations would not overcome the stifling effects of the massive Nazi bureaucracy. Eventually more and more

sectors of the economy would have to be taken over by the government, so that the final result would be either the implementation of Soviet-style communism or a complete collapse. In any case, Nazism would disappear on its own.⁸

On the other hand, Flynn offered dire predictions about what would happen to the United States if the country were drawn into the European war. Surveying the effects that the war had already had on the European belligerents, he concluded that neither capitalism nor democracy would survive such an ordeal; the hostilities, he wrote, were turning Europe into “a Junker bureaucrat’s paradise” in which everything was regulated, including what “people may eat and wear.” He expanded on this theme in an article that he wrote for *Harper’s* in early 1940. Entitled “Can Hitler Beat American Business?” it argued that while U.S. intervention would probably bring about a quick and victorious end to the war, the final outcome would cause Hitler’s “ghost to shriek with laughter.” The war would bring about greater government control over the economy, a much larger national debt, and a militarization of the entire society. That is, it would finish what the New Deal started by turning the United States fully into a fascist country.⁹

Indeed, Flynn saw evidence that this process was well underway. “The three ingredients of fascism,” he wrote in the summer of 1940, “the corporative state, militarism, and dictatorship, have all had a work-out in our midst.” The first, he claimed, had made its appearance in the form of the NRA, and he noted with grim satisfaction that as the country moved toward war “most of the old NRA gang” were moving back into power under “the banner of national defense.” The administration’s large expenditures on the army and navy suggested that the second element, militarism, loomed on the horizon. Finally, glimpses of the third—dictatorship—could be seen in Roosevelt’s attempt to “pack” the Supreme Court and his decision to run for a third term. While Flynn never claimed that the president intended to bring fascism to the United States, he believed FDR’s policies were “paving the way for the loss of democracy.”¹⁰

Flynn found particularly ominous the government’s efforts to silence opposition to the administration’s foreign policy. In February 1940 he warned Senator Bennett C. Clark (Dem.-Missouri) that J. Edgar Hoover’s Federal Bureau of Investigation was gaining considerable strength. Hoover, he informed his readers, had carried out the infamous “Palmer Raids” against suspected radicals in 1919 and was now conducting menacing inquiries into the activities of antiwar organizations such as the

KAOWC. Under him, Flynn wrote in 1941, the FBI was becoming a “Gestapo,” but what Flynn found even more amazing was that liberals were not uttering a single word of protest. Hoover had been appointed head of the FBI by Roosevelt’s attorney general, Frank Murphy. Why was Roosevelt not being blamed for allowing a “witch-hunt” to go on under his watch?¹¹

Flynn’s fears worsened in the late summer and fall of 1940. First, Roosevelt signed an executive agreement with Great Britain in which fifty American destroyers were transferred to the Royal Navy in return for ninety-nine-year leases on bases in the Western Hemisphere. Flynn, who told Norman Thomas that the deal made him feel like “a man on whom a building had fallen,” began openly calling for the president’s impeachment, but Congress soon did the administration one better by considering a peacetime draft for the first time in U.S. history. The writer was horrified, calling the measure “the most basic change in the American way of life we have ever faced.” Conscription, he warned in a telegram to Republican presidential candidate Wendell Willkie, was part of a larger effort to “infect our society with the martial spirit.”¹²

The KAOWC, now under Flynn’s leadership, fought unsuccessfully against both the destroyers-for-bases deal and conscription. However, even before these defeats Flynn had begun to question the effectiveness of the organization. The problem was that the various groups that made up the Congress were all liberal, and therefore had little appeal to conservatives who might be tempted to oppose the president’s foreign policy. He envisioned a new group, one that would attract “people of every political, social, racial and religious creed, people who would disagree on all sorts of things but who could unite in opposition to war.” As early as 1938 he was writing Norman Thomas about the need to bring together “numerous groups all over the country.” By the end of 1939 he was convinced that if the KAOWC were to make a difference it would have to make common cause with “dissatisfied or disgruntled conservatives.” The organization’s current work was insufficient, he wrote to Sidney Hertzberg, the editor of *Uncensored*, because there were “not enough liberals in the country to win any point.”¹³

The KAOWC never evolved into the sort of group that Flynn had in mind, but in August 1940 he got word of a new organization that was forming. In the middle of that month he received two letters—one from Wisconsin governor Philip La Follette and another from a Yale University law student named R. Douglas Stuart—inviting him to serve on the board

of something called the Emergency Committee to Defend America First. According to Stuart, the group's goal was "to bring together all American people who see eye to eye" on the need to resist the effort to draw the country into the European war. They were especially keen to have Flynn play a leadership role, explaining that his name stood "for something that will give confidence to thousands of Americans."¹⁴

For Stuart, Flynn was an attractive candidate indeed. Stuart himself was no conservative; his aspiration was to work as a lawyer for the Federal Trade Commission. Nor was the man who had agreed to serve as president of the group, General Robert E. Wood, the chairman of the board of Sears Roebuck, who had endorsed Roosevelt both in 1932 and in 1936. He did not break with the president until 1940, in response to the latter's decision to run for a third term. Nevertheless, many of those who flocked to the new organization's standard were Republicans, leading Stuart to worry that the group looked "too much like a Willkie Club." If the Emergency Committee to Defend America First were to avoid being tarred with the label "fascist," it would have to bring more liberals and leftists into the organization. Several, such as Philip La Follette, the historian Charles A. Beard, Stuart Chase, and Norman Thomas, had expressed sympathy toward the group's goals and offered their services as speakers but had refused officially to join.¹⁵

Flynn jumped at the opportunity. Here at last was the sort of organization that the writer had been hoping for, one that could possibly overcome the alliance of New Dealers and Republican militarists that he believed was directing the country's foreign policy. While the membership of the KAOWC would remain fairly stagnant over the next year, this group—whose name was soon simplified to the America First Committee (AFC)—quickly mushroomed. The best available estimates suggest that by the fall of 1941 it had somewhere between 800,000 and 850,000 dues-paying members. And although nearly two-thirds of the organization's membership lived within three hundred miles of Chicago, there were nevertheless five hundred chapters nationwide, giving the AFC a presence in forty-three of the fifty states.¹⁶

But while Flynn agreed to serve on the national committee of the AFC, it was far from apparent in the autumn of 1940 that he was going to play a particularly active role in the organization. In fact, after accepting Stuart's initial invitation, Flynn heard no more on the subject until November, when he attended his first meeting held at the Palmer House in Chicago. Some of the others present at that meeting included

Wood, Stuart, Congressman Bruce Barton (Rep.-New York), and the famous aviator Charles Lindbergh. Stuart told the audience that the America First Committee would become a truly national organization, with local chapters organized throughout the country. Of course, given its population and importance, it was clear that New York City would have a chapter, and indeed, it was revealed that there had been plans in the works to set up such a chapter as early as the beginning of October. However, when it was suggested that Flynn serve as its chairman, the writer demurred. He argued that he could do far more for the cause through his journalism, thanks to his access to widely read newspapers and magazines. Moreover, he insisted, the chapter would be better off under the leadership of some well-known businessman, since the newspapers would be more likely to pay attention to the activities of such a person. Therefore, while he pledged to “work to the limit of my capacity” for the America First Committee, he had no desire to direct its operations in New York City.¹⁷

Stuart and Wood, however, were determined that Flynn play an important role in the formation of the New York City chapter. Their main reason for this was that a small group of extreme conservatives in the metropolitan area were threatening to establish their own anti-interventionist group, possibly affiliated with Verne Marshall’s Iowa-based No Foreign War Committee. These men—George Eggleston, editor of *Scribner’s Commentator*; Merwin K. Hart of the New York State Economic Council; and Edward Rumely of the League for Constitutional Government—suspected Stuart and Wood of “New Deal tendencies.” According to Stuart, they were also upset that the AFC had a Jew, Lessing Rosenwald, on its national committee. In any case, Stuart feared that if they managed to create a rival “reactionary” organization before America First had a chance to establish itself in the area, the antiwar movement would be hopelessly divided. The New York City chapter, they concluded, had to be organized immediately.¹⁸

By this time Flynn had been dismissed from the *New Republic*, so having some additional time on his hands he acceded to Stuart’s request to oversee the formation of the chapter. With the help of a small donation from H. Smith Richardson of the Vick Chemical Corporation, he held a series of luncheon meetings that brought together some of the leading citizens of New York City. Among those who attended these luncheons were F. Abbot Goodhue, chairman of the Bank of Manhattan; Cecil J. North of Metropolitan Life Insurance; Allan M. Pope, chairman of First Na-

tional Corporation; Benjamin Strong of the New York branch of the Federal Reserve; H. Dudley Swim of National Investors Corporation; Theodore and Archibald Roosevelt, sons of the former president; and Richard E. Berlin, General Manager of Hearst Publications. At one such meeting, on December 12, those present voted to create a steering committee to organize the chapter and appoint a chairman. Flynn agreed to head this committee.¹⁹

Yet finding a chair soon proved more difficult than Flynn had imagined, for despite their apparent initial enthusiasm for the committee, many local businessmen proved reluctant to commit themselves to it publicly. Allan Pope seemed an excellent choice, for in addition to being a bank president he was a retired army colonel. But while Pope clearly supported the organization's goals, he told Flynn he would agree to serve as chair only on two conditions: that a respectable vice chairman be found "to do the chores" and that the heads of three other large New York banks agree to have their names appear on the organization's letterhead. The first condition was satisfied fairly quickly, as a friend introduced Flynn to Edwin S. Webster, a senior partner in the distinguished law firm of Kidder, Peabody. Webster had been widely credited with having revived the firm, which had nearly gone bankrupt during the depression. He was a dedicated opponent of the administration's foreign policy and readily offered temporarily to give up his legal practice in order to devote all his time to the cause. He seemed an ideal choice for the job of vice chair, which Flynn offered and Webster immediately accepted.²⁰

But when it came to lining up bank presidents to have their names publicly associated with the AFC, Flynn ran up against a brick wall. Since they were officials in large corporations, they all believed they had to consult their colleagues before committing themselves. At first they suggested this was a mere formality, but, Flynn later recalled, it turned out to be "something more than formal." First, F. Abbot Goodhue declined, informing Flynn that there had been "violent protest" from the Bank of Manhattan's board of directors. They feared that his association with a controversial group might offend depositors and lead them to withdraw their funds in protest. This was a pattern repeated with many of those who had initially expressed interest in the committee's work. "One by one," Flynn wrote, "most of those who had agreed to serve had to notify me that they were unable to do so for the same or similar reasons."²¹

Eventually this became a problem for nearly all the prominent businessmen who had attended Flynn's luncheon meetings. A typical response

came from Chester Bowles, one of the city's leading advertising executives. In Flynn's eyes, it was particularly important to have Bowles on board, for the latter had a long record of support for the president's domestic policy, and his presence on the committee would make the group far more attractive to liberals. Bowles eventually agreed, but not before expressing serious reservations. Nearly all his firm's clients, he wrote Flynn on January 20, were supporters of intervention in the European war. He would risk alienating them only if Bruce Barton, his firm's leading competitor, agreed to do so as well.²²

This attitude left Flynn disgusted; he wrote Stuart complaining of "the shocking timidity of the business leaders here." But time was running short; Roosevelt on January 6 gave one of his "fireside chats" in which he unveiled his plan to transfer arms and other war matériel to Great Britain. This measure—which the administration dubbed "lend-lease"—had to be fought, and the people of New York City had to be enlisted in that fight. Flynn therefore concluded that the chapter had to be organized, "Pope or no Pope." He agreed to serve as chairman of what he saw as "a very responsible committee." Edwin Webster assumed the position of secretary, H. Dudley Swim was appointed treasurer, and a headquarters was set up in an office building at 49 East Fiftieth Street (the owner of the building, himself an AFC member, donated the space). The New York City chapter formally opened for business on January 25, 1941.²³

Flynn did not initially give up his involvement with the KAOWC; indeed, through the spring of 1941 he remained national chairman of that organization as well as chairman of the New York City chapter of the AFC. Through these positions he attempted to facilitate cooperation between the two groups in the battle against lend-lease and "armament economics." However, there was little harmony between them. In the words of Frederick J. Libby of the National Council for the Prevention of War, the America First Committee appealed "to the popular mood" and supported nationalism and "armed isolation," while the KAOWC placed "its emphasis on making democracy work, and on world economic unity, with a trend towards collectivism and planned economy democratically controlled."²⁴

In some ways Flynn's true sympathies remained with the KAOWC; after all, its hostility toward "militarism" far more closely matched his own. The AFC, by contrast, endorsed military spending, and six of the seven men on its original executive committee had served in the armed forces. Flynn was horrified when the headquarters in Chicago adopted a

new slogan: “National Defense at Any Expense, but Keep Our Boys at Home.” He fired off a letter complaining of the “great financial waste in much that is being done in the name of national defense” and informed Wood and Stuart that his chapter would not use the slogan in any of its materials.²⁵

However, as the battle against intervention went on, Flynn felt increasingly obliged to choose between the two organizations. Ultimately, because he believed that the AFC was the more effective organization, he took less and less of an active role in the KAOWC’s operations. As late as Memorial Day weekend (May 31–June 2), he presided over the Second National Anti-War Congress, a rally sponsored by the KAOWC in Washington, D.C. But even though the rally’s program listed him as national chairman, in reporting on the event two days later, Libby expressed uncertainty as to whether this was actually the case. Two months later, Norman Thomas denied that Flynn was even a member of the organization. “I think he was reelected but he doesn’t serve” was his answer to a query. “He certainly is not acting chairman or any kind of chairman.” By the fall Flynn’s name no longer appeared on the group’s letterhead.²⁶

As Flynn became less and less involved in the KAOWC, he committed himself body and soul to the New York City chapter of America First. He was determined to make it one of the most effective in the country, and his efforts reaped handsome dividends. By June the chapter had nearly eighty thousand members and was attracting new members at the rate of one thousand a day. It would ultimately have nearly two hundred thousand members, roughly one-quarter of the national organization’s total membership. The chapter eventually employed sixty paid staff members and hundreds of regular volunteers. It sponsored subsidiary chapters in each of the five boroughs, with numerous subchapters under each. There was a Women’s Division, a Wall Street Division, a Veterans’ Division, and a Labor Division, each with its own office. The chapter also employed a team of writers, directed and supervised personally by Flynn, so that it published more original literature than any other in the nation. It had its own weekly newspaper (*the America First Bulletin*) and a daily column (*the “Battle Page”*) that appeared both in the *Chicago Tribune* and in the *New York Daily News*, reaching a readership of approximately 2 million. So successful was the chapter that Flynn could boast in August that “we represent an overwhelming majority of the people of New York City,” in spite of the fact that it was “the very capital of the war movement.” He estimated that there were seven or eight pro-war organizations in the

metropolitan area, but the membership of all of them combined amounted to no more than a fifth of the AFC chapter's total membership. Ruth Sarles, director of the national speakers' bureau, would later refer to Flynn's chapter as the strongest in the entire organization, "a barricade against intervention that touched millions."²⁷

But in spite of the fact that Flynn worked diligently to build the America First Committee, in some ways he seemed out of place in the organization. His discomfort with the group's policy of "armed isolation" has already been mentioned. Moreover, the anti-interventionist movement drew in a great many conservatives, the sort of men whom for the past ten years Flynn had been publicly denouncing as "reactionaries" and "economic royalists." Many also remembered all too well his work on the Board of Higher Education, when he pushed for the dismissal of Frederick Robinson and for the hiring of Bertrand Russell. Therefore, from the beginning there were complaints that Flynn was the wrong man to head the New York City chapter. Luigi Criscuolo, a prominent Catholic layman, complained to General Wood that "[e]verybody here regards him as a radical and he certainly is out of place in any committee that is supposed to hold conservative, American views." Another correspondent informed Flynn that, although he despised the president's foreign policy, he would have nothing to do with the AFC, which was obviously riddled with "Marxist influences." The Reverend Edward Lodge Curran, pastor of St. Stephen's Church in Brooklyn and director of the Anti-War Crusade of the International Catholic Truth Society, launched a public effort to remove him from the position as chairman, citing his efforts on behalf of that "advocate of adultery" Russell.²⁸

This discontent suggested that Flynn would face a difficult situation in the coming months. On the one hand, he would be leading a very public fight against the Roosevelt administration and all those advocating an interventionist foreign policy. On the other hand, at the same time he would be waging a quieter war against more conservative forces who resented that a "radical" should hold such an important position in the organization. These struggles and the effects they had on Flynn are the subject of the next two chapters.

The Nazi Transmission Belt

Flynn's involvement with the America First Committee became all-absorbing in 1941. Although he kept his daily Scripps-Howard column "Plain Economics," contributed a handful of magazine articles, and had a book published during that year, his writing output declined substantially from the previous year. For the writer was fighting not one battle but rather four simultaneously. In addition to the campaign against the administration's foreign policy—which proved almost completely unsuccessful—he was resisting the efforts of pro-intervention organizations in New York City to characterize the AFC as fascist sympathizers. At the same time, he battled extremist groups such as the German-American Bund and the supporters of Father Coughlin, whose members were constantly attempting to infiltrate the ranks of America First. Finally, he found himself at war with members of his own chapter who resented his heavy-handed style of management and found Flynn too liberal for their tastes.

Yet in January and early February the fight seemed far less complicated. Roosevelt had thrown down the gauntlet in his January 6 fireside chat, in which he announced his new lend-lease plan. Great Britain, the president warned, was running out of resources with which to fight the war against Nazi Germany. If the United States did not come to Britain's assistance by providing its armed forces with ships, planes, and other implements of war, there was a real chance that Hitler might win the war. In that case, he warned, the British navy would no longer be available to patrol the Atlantic, and the security of the United States would be at risk.

Flynn, in his capacity as national chairman of the Keep America Out of War Congress, was quick to respond, issuing a press release the following morning denouncing lend-lease in the strongest terms. "It is not merely a question whether Hitler will construe this act as an act of war," the release read. "It *is* an act of war." Until this point Roosevelt's policy

had been aid to Britain “short of war,” but now, Flynn wrote, the president was advocating a policy that was calculated to bring the country into the European conflict.¹

Flynn threw himself more completely into the fight against lend-lease than he did into any previous foreign policy issue. In late January he appeared in a series of debates—both in person and on the radio—against such opponents as Senators Josh Lee (Dem.-Arkansas) and Claude Pepper (Dem.-Florida); Herbert Agar, editor of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*; and Wall Street banker James P. Warburg. His involvement also led him to cooperate with at least one surprising new ally: his partner in one debate was none other than General Hugh S. Johnson, who, as head of the National Recovery Administration, had been one of Flynn’s mortal enemies in the mid-1930s (see Chapter 3). In these debates the writer would lay out the basic points that anti-interventionists would repeat again and again in the next eleven months: that the president was trying to make himself a “dictator”; that Germany posed no threat to the United States, even if Britain were to fall; and that Roosevelt sought “to entangle the American people in the European war so inextricably that they cannot get out.”²

The campaign against lend-lease culminated in another appearance by Flynn before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He did so at the request of his old friend Senator Gerald P. Nye, who sought to draw on the writer’s knowledge of economics and finance. The British, Nye suspected, were misleading Americans about their condition; they had far more resources at their disposal than they were letting on, so the president’s aid proposal was unnecessary. Flynn’s job, the North Dakota Republican wrote, was to “tear the very hide off all those who are insisting that Britain is at the end of the rope.” But by this time the writer’s hectic schedule had begun to catch up with him, and he came down with a serious illness in early February that made it impossible for him to travel to Washington. He did, however, send a statement that was read into the *Congressional Record*, and which the America First Committee printed and distributed nationwide. In his written testimony, he disputed the testimony of Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, who told the Senate committee that the British had only about \$1.4 billion in gold and dollar assets with which to meet \$1.8 billion in obligations. Flynn argued that this figure was inadequate, as it did not include Britain’s overseas assets. Drawing on figures provided by the Federal Reserve Board, the Department of Commerce, and even the treasury secretary’s own statistics, the

writer claimed that the British Empire's total assets were somewhere in the neighborhood of \$4.5 billion.³

Lend-lease proved to be the biggest subject of discussion during the New York City chapter's first rally, held at the Mecca Temple in Manhattan on February 20. Senators Nye and Wheeler were the main speakers, but Norman Thomas, Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, and Flynn himself gave shorter talks as well. Roughly thirty-five hundred attended the rally, which netted several thousand dollars in contributions to the America First Committee. However, at this rally a darker undercurrent of the anti-interventionist movement made its appearance as well. An individual named Joe McWilliams—nicknamed the “American Fuehrer”—was present at the rally along with some of his supporters. Members of an organization calling itself the American Destiny Party, affiliated with Father Coughlin's “Christian Front,” McWilliams and his cronies began distributing anti-Semitic literature. Flynn put a stop to this as soon as he learned about it, and all the speakers took pains to distance America First from people like McWilliams, but the incident suggested that unsavory elements would continue to be attracted to the anti-interventionist cause.⁴

Even more disturbing than the presence of McWilliams was the reaction of those who favored American intervention. While donations were being collected for America First activities, a man shouted, “Who's giving the money, Hitler or Mussolini?” Those standing around him demanded that the individual be thrown out, and a policeman began to do so. However, Flynn stopped him. “This is an American meeting,” he told the audience, “and if anyone has anything to say they are free to say it.” The heckler was allowed to remain, but the real problems came on the following day, when Frank Kingdon and Herbert Bayard Swope, leaders of the local chapter of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, issued a press statement denouncing America First in no uncertain terms. The rally, they wrote, had attracted an “un-American audience,” citing as evidence that while the attendees booed every time the president's name came up, there was no response at all when Hitler, Mussolini, or Stalin was mentioned. “[I]ntentionally or not,” they concluded, “the Nyes, Wheelers and Thomases are making their appeal to the Nazis, Fascists, Communists and their fellow-travelers in this country.” Most of the local newspapers were quick to report this, and they also mentioned the presence of Joe McWilliams and his American Destiny Party. Flynn complained that they received more attention than the speakers did, creating

the false impression that they were a powerful force within America First. The interventionists, it seemed, were prepared to play hardball.⁵

The experience of the February 20 rally served to convince Flynn that extremists would have to be kept away from the organization, and that the best way to do this was through strict control from the top. At the chapter's first meeting, he made it clear that regular members should not speak to the press even if contacted; they should, rather, refer reporters to the headquarters, since "it would be very dangerous if members of the Committee were to give their individual ideas to the newspapers." There was always a danger that even statements that were "very honest in intention" might be "misconstrued in a way to be harmful to our cause." Reporters were to be treated with the utmost suspicion—even if they seemed friendly, most of them were looking for an opportunity to associate America First in the public mind with fascism and anti-Semitism.⁶

It is clear that extremist groups were eager to associate themselves with the organization. In early May the German-American Bund, a group that openly expressed its admiration for Hitler, published in its newspaper a call for its readers to join the America First Committee. Flynn immediately sent the Bund's leaders a letter that he demanded be published in the paper's next issue. "We do not want in our organization men who support the philosophy of Hitler's government," he wrote, "because we do not believe them to be good Americans." The letter was duly published, along with a note from the editors claiming that they had "no desire to see the America First Committee suffer." To Flynn's great annoyance, however, Bund's newspaper continued to carry articles favorable to the AFC.⁷

A similar incident occurred in early August, when a certain S. H. Hauck of the Flanders Hall Publishing Company asked for the New York City chapter's assistance in distributing copies of *We Must Save the Republic*, a collection of speeches by the staunchly anti-interventionist congressman Stephen A. Day (Rep.-Illinois). Flynn, however, was suspicious. He had learned—correctly—that Flanders Hall was a front for the German government and rejected Hauck's plea. Moreover, when he found out a month later that Hauck was using the words "an America First publication" on the cover of Day's book, he told him to stop doing so, as it implied a connection between the AFC and Flanders Hall. Shortly afterward, the publishing house was forced to close.⁸

But the biggest blow-up occurred on May 23, at the New York City chapter's third rally. By this time America First rallies were attracting

massive audiences; its second mass meeting, held in late April in the Manhattan Center, attracted well over thirty thousand people to hear a keynote address by Charles Lindbergh. Since the hall was designed to hold no more than five thousand, the vast majority jammed the streets, listening to the speeches via a remote sound system. For the May rally, therefore, Flynn decided to use Madison Square Garden, and twenty-two thousand turned out to hear Wheeler and Lindbergh, by now the AFC's most popular speakers. The audience, the *New York Times* reported, was "highly demonstrative and noisy." The doors opened at 5:00, and by 7:30 most of the seats in the Garden were filled. Ushers passed out small American flags as the chapter's leaders prepared for the most successful mass meeting in AFC history.⁹

Then the complication arose, as news soon flew about the Garden that Joe McWilliams was seated in the seventh row—and worse, he was surrounded by reporters and photographers. Two AFC ushers asked him to leave, and when he refused they asked a policeman to remove him. The officer would not do so, as McWilliams seemed to be causing no trouble. Backstage, however, Lindbergh reported that Flynn "flew into a rage" over the presence of the "American Fuehrer." He told the aviator that he planned to denounce him from the platform, to which Lindbergh assented, as long as it was "done with dignity and moderation." But Flynn, never very good at moderation, had fire in his eyes as he mounted the rostrum. Referring to McWilliams by name, he pointed directly at him, telling the audience, "What he is doing here, how he got in, or whose stooge he is I do not know. But I do know that the photographers for the war-making newspapers always know where to find him." He spoke of efforts to "smear" and "discredit" the AFC by publicizing his presence. He then continued:

This organization seeks the support of the 100,000,000 Americans who are against war. It is not crazy enough to want the support of a handful of Bundists, Communists and Christian Fronters who are without number, without influence, without power, and without respect in this or any other community.¹⁰

There was afterward some dispute over what actually happened next. John Roy Carlson, in his wartime exposé of America First, claimed that "the Coughlinite mob burst into applause for Joe," and that there was only a "weak, unconvincing round of boos" against McWilliams. This,

however, was a minority view. Lindbergh recalled that after Flynn's denunciation "the crowd was ready to tear McWilliams apart," although he feared that the incident served only to give him more publicity. And even the reporter assigned to cover the rally for the militantly interventionist newspaper *PM* wrote that most of those in attendance "seemed sympathetic to Flynn's attack on McWilliams," with only "a smattering of applause for the Yorkville Fuehrer."¹¹

What is clear is that after the May 23 rally Flynn was deeply unpopular among Coughlinites. Father Coughlin personally denounced him in the pages of his magazine, *Social Justice*. More disturbing was the hate mail the chapter head received. Typical was the response of one John L. O'Connor, who warned that "if you don't stop your attacks on true Christians like McWilliams, you'll see what will happen to you." Flynn later remarked on the irony of the situation: while the newspapers were claiming that America First was "hooked up with the Christian Front," the Coughlinites themselves were using the mails to savage him. He claimed that "a week never passed that I did not receive threats and denunciations from these people."¹²

Guarding against the infiltration of pro-fascist and anti-Semitic individuals became one of Flynn's most important, if most thankless, tasks. He eventually found himself personally scanning letters from those who sought to join the chapter, looking for any hint of sympathy for extremists. Certain of the group's officers—particularly Ed Webster—believed that Flynn was being too vigilant, rejecting on flimsy grounds individuals who might prove helpful in the battle against intervention. By the fall there was a growing chorus of complaints that the chairman was using too heavy a hand, shutting down subchapters on the slightest suspicion that undesirables had managed to join their ranks. This would ultimately result in a virtual uprising against Flynn's direction, one that will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that for every expression of gratitude for this policy—for example, Chester Bowles wrote in October to praise Flynn for "keeping America First free of bad influences"—there were many others who believed either that he was going too far or that he was not going far enough. For instance, one member sent a letter of resignation in July, complaining that the chapter was "wide open and unguarded for the infiltration of an element true Americans will not tolerate." The most serious loss by far was Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, a member of the chapter's executive committee and a regular speaker at AFC events, who left in August on the

grounds that America First had not sufficiently distanced itself from Coughlin.¹³

Such administrative issues may have proved major headaches for Flynn, but they did not prevent him from commenting, in print, on the radio, and in public appearances, on American foreign policy. Despite the AFC's best efforts, lend-lease passed both houses of Congress by substantial margins in March. But there were other battles to be fought—against the president's suggestion that American warships should participate in convoys of goods to England ("let us trade . . . without the benefit of battleships," Flynn said in a radio debate); the administration's decision to occupy Iceland (an "audacious act," he wrote, and "a shocking and shameful imposition" upon the American people); and the Atlantic Charter, signed by FDR and Churchill (a "cover-up," Flynn called it, for a conspiracy to protect British imperialism around the world).¹⁴

Late June brought good news for Flynn—that Hitler had unleashed his armed forces against Stalin's Soviet Union. The AFC leader had predicted that this would occur as early as January, claiming that Germany required the "bread basket" of the Ukraine and western Russia to sustain its war effort. This, he announced, was the "real war," as opposed to the Anglo-German struggle, "a mere flea bite." But the involvement of the Soviets in the war made it all the more important that the United States stay out. No longer could advocates of intervention claim that this was a war to defend democracy. "If Germany wins," he wrote in an AFC press release, "Russia will go Fascist. If Russia defeats Germany, Germany will go Communist. There is no choice for us at all. The question now is, *are we going to fight to make Europe safe for Communism?*"¹⁵

Flynn also recognized that the new war in the East would fundamentally alter the balance of forces in the battle over American intervention. He noted with satisfaction that on the eve of the German invasion polls were showing 76 percent of the American people opposed to entering the war, while in August that figure had increased to 86 percent. Conservatives and Christians who had heretofore remained aloof from the struggle were now committing themselves to the anti-interventionist cause. American communists, meanwhile, switched sides overnight. For months Flynn had been fighting to keep communists out of the KAOWC and the AFC. As national director of the former, he issued a statement reminding members that the communists ultimately had the interests of the Soviet Union at heart and were therefore not sincere advocates of nonentanglement in European affairs. Moreover, during the first five months of the

AFC's existence he noted that certain newspapers were nearly as interested in the presence of communists at the organization's rallies as they were in that of right-wing extremists such as Joe McWilliams. However, now all this would change. On the one hand, Flynn confessed to enjoying the spectacle of communists "cheering for the United States and Britain" and attending and circulating literature at meetings of pro-interventionist groups. On the other hand, he had some sense for what communists were capable of. They were dangerous enemies, and in the coming months he would become convinced that they were responsible for a sustained smear campaign against anti-interventionists in general and America First in particular.¹⁶

Of course, the forces supporting intervention did not wait for the communists to join them before smearing America First. The debate over the course of foreign policy in 1941 was one of the fiercest in U.S. history. It has to be said that both sides resorted to rhetorical excess, unfair characterizations, and smear tactics. However, since the anti-interventionists opposed getting involved in a war against a regime as horrific as that of Nazi Germany, it proved easier for their opponents to make their accusations stick—no matter how unfair those accusations might be. As mentioned earlier, this began with the claim by Frank Kingdon and Herbert Bayard Swope that the thirty-five hundred New Yorkers who attended the February 20 AFC rally were "an anti-American audience." Three weeks later pro-war groups sponsored a radio address in which this charge was repeated and the organization itself was referred to as the "Hitler First Committee."¹⁷

The war of words escalated in late March, when a pro-intervention organization called the Friends of Democracy printed a scandal sheet entitled "The America First Committee: The Nazi Transmission Belt." While the report admitted that most of its members were "patriotic Americans" who were sincere in their beliefs, it characterized them as dupes of Hitler and Mussolini. It made a great deal of the presence of extremists such as Joe McWilliams at America First meetings. Moreover, in a classic attempt at guilt by association, it quoted members of the German-American Bund and Father Coughlin's Christian Front as praising the organization and noted that the AFC had been "formally endorsed" by the German government. "In its war upon democracy the Axis has no more effective ally in the United States than the America First Committee," the report concluded. "[I]t is more effective than any Nazi agent or organization."¹⁸

This was hardly the sort of thing that Flynn could be expected to take lying down. He looked into the Friends of Democracy and found that some very prominent individuals—some of whom were acquaintances of his—belonged to its national committee. So he wrote these men to ask whether they supported the accusation that America First was a “Nazi transmission belt.” Of the twelve Flynn contacted, nine disclaimed it, a fact he then duly passed along to the press. Ordway Tead, his old ally from the Board of Higher Education, insisted that he was “not in sympathy with that kind of attack and was no way party to it.” Paul Hutchinson, editor of *Christian Century*, claimed that he had resigned from the national committee a year before, yet Friends of Democracy continued to use his name without consent. The eminent historian Will Durant was most direct in his criticism: “The notion that every opponent of America’s entry into the war is a Nazi agent is a disgrace to the American reputation of fair play.”¹⁹

Not all those Flynn contacted repudiated the accusation. The New Dealer David Cushman Coyle went on record as supporting it, as did the author Louis Bromfield. But the most wounding response came from the philosopher John Dewey, a figure whom Flynn had long admired, who wrote that there was no denying the “transmission belt” charge. The AFC leader responded with “amazement.” One of the greatest minds of the age had embraced militarism and was now “joining up with the witch-hunt on Americans who are struggling to keep this country out of war.” If America First failed in its efforts, he wrote, “everything that you have fought for all your life . . . will go into the scrap heap.” He closed by promising to keep Dewey’s letter “as one of my melancholy souvenirs of this wretched era.”²⁰

The attack by the Friends of Democracy did not single out Flynn for criticism, but this is not to say that he managed to escape other personal attacks. In late April, former city magistrate Joseph Goldstein wrote a public letter to Mayor LaGuardia demanding that Flynn be removed at once from the city’s Board of Higher Education. His participation in the America First Committee, Goldstein claimed, rendered him unfit to serve on such a body.²¹ The letter amounted to nothing, but in October the writer faced a more serious blow—*Collier’s* announced that Flynn was being dropped from its editorial board, citing the fact that it had been years since his work had appeared in the magazine. More damaging than the announcement itself was its source. Flynn claimed to have learned of

his dismissal not from anyone at *Collier's* but rather from Walter Winchell's radio program. A vehement pro-interventionist, Winchell clearly relished the news. It was a slight that the writer would not soon forget.²²

Flynn also believed that his role in America First hurt his standing in the publishing industry. In 1940 he had signed a contract with Simon and Schuster for his next book, a study of twelve of the richest tycoons in world history, entitled *Men of Wealth*. Much of it came from articles he had written in the late 1920s and 1930s, and the book's thesis was familiar to anyone who followed Flynn's career. He drew a sharp distinction between those who had earned their fortunes by accomplishing great things, such as building railroad lines and oil refineries, and those who grew rich simply by manipulating stocks and bonds. *Men of Wealth* appeared in print in the spring of 1941 and met with generally favorable reviews. The *New York Times* praised the book, which, according to its reviewer, "sounds more like the old John T. Flynn than his last one [i.e., *Country Squire in the White House*] did." While the author had a tendency to get "certain of his facts twisted or only half straight"—the reviewer counted at least ten errors in a single chapter and three in a single sentence—"the material is presented in compact, colorful form, with . . . only occasional potshots at Mr. Roosevelt and the New Deal."²³

After the smashing success of *Country Squire in the White House*, Flynn apparently expected *Men of Wealth* to do well. Certainly, since his output as a writer had declined sharply since 1940, the income from another best-selling book would have made a significant difference to him financially. Yet the sales never materialized, and the author believed that the publisher was to blame. He suspected that Simon and Schuster was doing too little to promote the book and concluded that it had something to do with his very public views on American foreign policy. He became convinced of this suspicion in the fall, when the publishing house placed its annual double-page ad in the *New York Times Book Review*. Scanning the ad, Flynn was outraged to find that *Men of Wealth* had not been included on the list of titles, leading him to fire off a letter to his editor, Quincy Howe, demanding to know why it had been omitted. Howe replied that there had been insufficient space to include all the press's active titles, so they had opted to include only those titles that were "most in demand." The explanation left the author unconvinced, and he would continue to hold a grudge against the firm for years to come.²⁴

Of all the accusations leveled at the America First Committee, the one that stung Flynn the most was the charge that, because it opposed entering the war against Nazi Germany, it was therefore an anti-Semitic organization. While most American Jewish groups supported intervention, it did not initially occur to the AFC's leaders that such a claim might be made; after all, Jews played a prominent role in the organization, particularly in the New York City chapter, where the office manager, publicity director, and head of research were all Jewish. Nevertheless, it was not long before pro-intervention groups began to attach the anti-Semitic label to their opponents. No doubt, Flynn admitted, given the sheer size of America First, there were "any number" of anti-Semites who had managed to join, but the organization's leadership had, he claimed, worked continually "to keep the Jewish issue completely out of the argument." Besides, he argued, the interventionists were hardly free of anti-Semitism; as pointed out in an AFC publication, the British Purchasing Commission, which represented the British government in buying arms and supplies from the United States, openly discriminated against non-Anglo-Saxons (including Jews) in its hiring practices.²⁵

In any case, the attacks continued throughout the life of the organization, leading Norman Thomas to lament that interventionists had taken to reflexively tossing charges of anti-Semitism at anyone who challenged the administration's foreign policy. For Flynn it posed an additional problem in that it made it even more difficult to keep Jew-baiters out of the AFC. Anti-Semitism, he wrote, had "never had the support of reputable people in this country," but the "war groups" were actually making it acceptable "by daily advertising to the community that the members of our committee were sponsoring an anti-semitic [*sic*] movement." As a result, those who hated Jews were encouraged "to crawl out of their holes and try to enlist" in the anti-interventionist cause. For his own part, Flynn denied having any tendency toward anti-Semitism, pointing to his record on the Board of Higher Education as evidence of his willingness to defend Jews from attack.²⁶

By the summer the smear campaign against America First had convinced Flynn that the time had come to strike back. At that point there was no particular issue pending, such as lend-lease or convoys earlier in the year, that could galvanize the antiwar movement, nor did it seem likely that one would emerge in the immediate future. He therefore endorsed a bold new strategy for the AFC—a frontal assault against the

forces supporting intervention. It began with the formulation of a list of everyone “active in any way in the propaganda to get us into war.” This would include the obvious figures—members of groups like the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies and Friends of Democracy, as well as authors of pro-war books and articles—but also what Flynn called “the social lobby.” By this he meant “refugee royalty, visiting noblemen, economists, celebrities, people of wealth, etc.,” whom he believed were quietly pushing for U.S. intervention. In July he met with Lindbergh and H. Smith Richardson to discuss a full-scale investigation, which the latter agreed to fund through a \$2,000 donation.²⁷

The first target was the media. For years Flynn had expressed concern that since newspapers were dependent on advertising, they were susceptible to “Wall Street propaganda.” He was even more concerned about radio, since control of the airwaves was concentrated in the hands of a much smaller group than was the case with the press. Broadcasting, therefore, gave “the great commercial interests of the country an almost exclusive use of the radio as a propaganda weapon.” By 1940 he had begun to suspect that this weapon was firmly in the control of the interventionists. He found sinister intent in the words of NBC President David Sarnoff, who in August of that year admonished broadcasters to use their medium to promote “national unity.” By the following year he was convinced that radio was “largely under the domination of groups that are themselves in a state of hysteria about involving America in this war.”²⁸

But of all the American media outlets, none seemed more vulnerable than the motion picture industry. Eight major studios produced virtually all the films viewed in the United States, and thanks to trade practices such as block-booking and blind-selling, local theater owners were virtually coerced into accepting Hollywood’s products, whether or not they conformed to community tastes and standards. For that reason the industry had been subject to numerous investigations since the Progressive Era, and as recently as 1940 the studios only narrowly escaped an antitrust suit brought by independent producers and theater owners. When in that same year the “Big Eight” began releasing films with an overtly pro-British, anti-German message, anti-interventionists were quick to denounce Hollywood as a source of “pro-war” propaganda.²⁹

Flynn decided, therefore, to make the movie industry the target of his first assault. In late July he met with Senators Wheeler, Nye, Bennett Champ Clark (Dem.-Missouri), Charles Tobey (Rep.-New Hampshire), D. Worth Clark (Dem.-Idaho), and Homer T. Bone (Dem.-Washington),

all of whom were associated with the America First Committee. There he outlined his plan: on August 1, Nye would make a national radio address—written for him by Flynn—denouncing the studios as “gigantic engines of propaganda” designed “to influence public sentiment in the direction of participation by the United States in the present European war.” The following afternoon Clark would introduce a resolution—again drafted by Flynn—calling for an investigation into the activities of the “Big Eight.” The resolution, they knew, would automatically be referred to the Interstate Commerce Committee, of which Wheeler was chair. Wheeler could then, without a vote of the Senate—which they all knew would never pass—form a subcommittee that would summon the “movie magnates” to Washington to determine whether a full investigation was warranted. The full-scale investigation called for in the resolution would most likely never take place, but the subcommittee hearings would put studio owners such as Daryl F. Zanuck and Harry Warner “on the spot” and “focus national attention on their culpability.”³⁰

For Flynn, this investigation would accomplish several goals. First of all, it would put the pro-intervention forces on the defensive for the first time. Second, he hoped that it would “stimulate, arouse, fill with enthusiasm” the membership of America First, which had lacked a specific target ever since the fight over lend-lease. But most important, Flynn believed that it was critical to identify individual evildoers—to rail against “the system” was not enough. He told Nye that to be successful he must hammer away with a specific set of questions: “Who are the men? Who are the culprits? Who are these people who are furnishing the money, etc. Who, who, who?”³¹

The plan proceeded as intended, and the hearings were scheduled to begin in early September. In the meantime, Flynn’s investigation was going strong. Using the money he received from Richardson, he identified fifty movies “which constitute deliberate propaganda.” Moreover, he believed that he found “evidence of collaboration between the film magnates and the government to whip up the hysteria.” Senator D. Worth Clark, chairman of the subcommittee, asked him to give the final testimony against the studios—summing up the case, as it were—and so the writer made plans to travel to Washington to testify on Capitol Hill, as he had done so many times before.³²

However, this time things were different. His previous appearances before congressional committees had been to assist the efforts of others. This time, although the Senate subcommittee might be handling the

proceedings in public, it was clearly Flynn who was running the show. As mentioned earlier, he had been the author of both Nye's speech and the Senate resolution, and he was asked to testify at the hearings. In addition, the testimony of the other two witnesses for the prosecution, Nye and Clark, was based largely on notes that he provided for them. He told them that each man should reiterate that he had no interest in censorship but that rather he sought "to prevent a small group of men all on one side acting to use this tremendous instrument to get this country into war." Finally, the AFC leader even provided members of the subcommittee with questions to put before the studio heads who would be called to testify.³³

Flynn made his appearance before the subcommittee as scheduled on September 11. He accused the industry of loading its products with "pro-war propaganda," because it was in the hands of "four or five men who cannot possibly have an American point of view." They "flooded" the market with films "glorifying the magnificence, humanity and democracy of the British Empire," while never once mentioning "the tyrannies and oppressions in India," where there were "20,000 Indian patriots in jail." The only way to overcome this unfair domination of a powerful industry was to use the antitrust laws to break up the major studios' "monopoly" over production and exhibition facilities.³⁴

The studios had hired as their legal adviser none other than the former Republican presidential candidate Wendell Willkie, reportedly at a cost of \$100,000. He responded to the investigation by claiming that it was unwarranted; his clients, he informed the subcommittee, were happy to admit that in the present conflict they favored Great Britain over Nazi Germany. The real issue was the possibility of government control of the film industry, which would place the country on the slippery slope toward dictatorship. After he listened to the testimony of Nye, Clark, and Flynn, Willkie noted the similarities among the three and voiced his suspicion that Flynn was secretly behind the entire investigation.³⁵

Nevertheless, for the moment Flynn and the America First Committee were riding high. The most powerful men in Hollywood would be forced to defend their production of "pro-war" films before the entire country. Flynn had virtually single-handedly orchestrated what General Wood in Chicago was calling "the most important matter we have before us." Moreover, the situation nationally seemed to be going well. The public appeared as determined as ever to stay out of the war, with every poll showing substantial majorities in favor of neutrality. And Flynn, as head

of the most active AFC chapter in the country—based, no less, in a city that many anti-interventionists had originally believed to be a lost cause—could claim no small part of the credit.³⁶

But Flynn's moment of triumph was not to last. Just a few hours after he gave his testimony before Clark's subcommittee, Charles Lindbergh would make an ill-advised and inflammatory speech that would suddenly throw the entire anti-interventionist movement back on the defensive. Moreover, it would trigger a crisis that would come close to tearing apart the New York City chapter of America First.

The Good Name of a Noble Cause

On September 12, the morning after his testimony regarding the motion picture industry, John T. Flynn was awakened by a telephone call from Edwin Webster, secretary of the New York City chapter of America First. Webster asked whether Flynn had heard about the speech Charles Lindbergh had given the night before in Des Moines, Iowa. Flynn replied that he had not yet seen the newspapers, so Webster explained that Lindbergh had identified the “powerful elements” behind the drive to involve the country in war. Among these, he claimed, were the Jews, whose “danger to this country lies in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our government.”¹

Webster was overjoyed at the speech, which also took aim at the British and the Roosevelt administration. Finally, he told Flynn, an America First speaker was coming out and saying what everybody knew to be the case but was afraid to discuss openly. He called on the chairman to issue a statement on behalf of the New York City chapter applauding the speech, which was sure to come under fire from pro-interventionist organizations. Flynn, however, was (as he later recalled) “horrified.” He would certainly not issue any sort of defense of the speech and warned Webster that nobody else in the chapter was to say anything at all about it without consulting the chairman beforehand.²

After hanging up with Webster, Flynn called Bob Stuart in Chicago. He learned that Lindbergh had never been required to clear his speeches in advance with the national headquarters; indeed, Stuart pointed out, the Lone Eagle was notorious for extemporizing at the podium. Flynn then rushed to the office, where he sent a teletype message to both Wood and Stuart. He was “profoundly disturbed” about the speech, which “literally committed the America First movement to an open attack on the Jews.”

The local newspapers were certain to ask for comment, and he had no idea what to say. The speech, he concluded, “might be almost fatal to us.”³

The resulting exchange revealed the extent to which Flynn remained out of step with the organization’s leadership. The speech was regrettable, Stuart replied, and he agreed in principle that Lindbergh should “consult with key members” of the national committee before speaking. However, since there was no undoing what had been done, and the pro-war groups would be quick to jump on “any evidence of dissent in our ranks,” the best course was to “close ranks” behind Lindbergh. This was something that Flynn utterly refused to do; he had worked too hard to prevent the “Jewish issue” from seeping into the debate over U.S. foreign policy. But now, just when the anti-interventionist cause was “blossoming into almost undreamed of success,” the aviator “had to blab the issue out and hang it on America First.”⁴

Flynn vented his frustrations in a personal letter to Lindbergh that he composed on September 15. His reaction to the speech, he told him, was “one of utter distress.” He did not believe for a moment that the aviator was anti-Semitic, but in “the shallow and casual judgment of the public” it would seem that he was; and, by extension, the America First Committee would also be “tagged with the anti-Jewish label,” which was “a deadly one to bear,” particularly in New York. Flynn admitted that most Jews were in favor of intervention, and some Jewish leaders sought “to brand everyone opposed to war as anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi.” To call attention to this would have been acceptable, but Lindbergh had instead denounced “the Jews” as warmakers,” and no one could do that “without incurring the guilt of religious and racial intolerance,” which was “poison in a community like ours.” He concluded by noting that Wood had called an emergency meeting of the national committee for September 18 and urged the aviator to consider “what can be done to repair the damage” before then.⁵

It was not as though Flynn had any personal animus against Lindbergh; indeed, he had rushed to the Lone Eagle’s defense when Roosevelt verbally attacked him earlier that spring. The president on that occasion had called him a “copperhead,” comparing him to northerners who sympathized with the Confederacy during the Civil War. In response Flynn had not only issued a statement on behalf of the New York City chapter assaulting Roosevelt for questioning Lindbergh’s patriotism; he had also contacted Burton Wheeler and other senators in an effort to get them to make similar statements on the floor of the Senate. Nor was Flynn the

only anti-interventionist to criticize the Des Moines speech. Norman Thomas immediately objected, warning Stuart that America First was running the risk of becoming “the mouthpiece of extremists and fanatics” and announcing that he would no longer accept invitations to speak at AFC events. The Keep America Out of War Congress issued a statement condemning the speech “without qualification” and denying that American Jews made up “a cohesive pro-war group.” At least three members of the AFC’s national committee resigned over the issue, and H. Smith Richardson, one of its most loyal supporters, threatened to stop sending donations if the executive board did not publicly distance itself from Lindbergh’s explosive remarks.⁶

Before the September 18 meeting in Chicago, Flynn and Lindbergh had an opportunity to discuss the issue face to face, although their accounts of what took place differ significantly. According to the former, the aviator said he had “no idea the speech would cause such a serious repercussion” and was sorry that he had given it under the auspices of America First. Moreover, while he opposed Flynn’s suggestion that he submit his speeches in advance to the executive committee—it would, he argued, be a violation of his freedom of speech—he agreed to consult the group before making “any new departures.” Lindbergh, by contrast, claimed that privately Flynn admitted that he agreed with everything he had said in the speech and merely faulted him for being so impolitic to come out and say it. “[A]pparently he [Flynn] would rather see us get into the war than mention in public what the Jews are doing,” the *Lone Eagle* recorded in his diary.⁷

But whatever happened in that meeting, it was clear that within America First, Flynn’s views were in the minority. When the national committee met, Wood announced that the correspondence from rank-and-file members was running between 85 and 90 percent in favor of Lindbergh’s speech. While many expressed the opinion that the aviator should have been more tactful, the overwhelming majority opposed any effort by the executive committee to repudiate his remarks. Indeed, Lindbergh claimed that most of those present favored making an explicit defense of the speech. When he offered to issue a statement of his own, making it clear that his words in no way represented “the policy of the committee,” Flynn was the only one in the room to approve. In the end the committee released a statement that, according to the *Lone Eagle*, “really took no stand at all.”⁸

The Des Moines speech would ultimately cause considerable damage to America First, but its most immediate casualty was the motion picture investigation. Flynn had intended to return to Washington to oversee the work of the Clark subcommittee, which was about to start hearing the testimony of the studio heads. However, he now informed Clark that this would be impossible, as he had to focus his attention on trying to limit the damage of Lindbergh's remarks. But if he thought that the hearings would continue smoothly without him, he was to be gravely mistaken. Willkie, representing the studio heads, quickly established that with the exception of Flynn, not a single one of those involved in prosecuting the case against the movie industry had even seen the films that they were criticizing. Moreover, even though Lindbergh had not been at all involved in the investigation, the fact that he mentioned the role of Jews in Hollywood immediately connected him to it in the public mind. Willkie called the Des Moines speech "the most un-American talk made in my time by any person of national reputation" and suggested that the motion picture inquiry was motivated by the same sentiments. By the end of the month the small budget that had been provided for the investigation had been depleted, with virtually nothing to show for its efforts. What had once been viewed as the great hope of the anti-interventionist cause had turned into a disaster, and in the end even the America First Committee tried to distance itself from it.⁹

The collapse of the motion picture investigation illustrates an important characteristic of Flynn's involvement in the battle against intervention. He proved to be a masterful organizer, and his talents as a speaker and writer were second to none. However, he was constantly unwilling to delegate any real authority, probably because he never trusted those who fought alongside him. Lindbergh characterized him as "one of those men who want to keep their fingers on every detail." Had he been able to devote all his attention to the subcommittee's hearings, it is likely that the outcome would have been quite different. But because he insisted on keeping tight control over the investigation, it had little chance of success after he was forced to address more pressing problems elsewhere.¹⁰

This unwillingness to delegate authority was also apparent in Flynn's direction of the New York City chapter of America First, where he came to clash with several of his chief lieutenants, particularly Edwin Webster. As discussed in Chapter 8, Webster had originally been brought into the organization on the understanding that he would serve as vice chair

alongside Allan Pope. However, when Pope refused to serve, Flynn agreed to become chairman only if he were able to direct the chapter on his own, so Webster was relegated to the position of secretary. But the two men seem to have had differing notions as to what Webster's role really was. Flynn's intent was to delegate to Webster "the routine of the organization," which would leave Flynn time to focus on writing and public appearances. Webster, however, believed that he was actually to direct the chapter's affairs, leaving Flynn in charge of publicity but with no authority over the rest of the organization.¹¹

Given this clash of expectations, it did not take long for tensions to develop between the two men, although open conflict did not arise until after the Des Moines speech. Ironically, the first to predict trouble in the Flynn-Webster relationship was Lindbergh, who visited the New York City offices in early June. Although he admitted that they were "doing a great job together," he could not help but wonder how long they could continue to get along sharing a single windowless office. Webster, a partner in an established Wall Street law firm, was a conservative Republican, far closer in politics to the old Liberty Leaguers whom Flynn had so often mocked during the 1930s. The Lone Eagle questioned how long it would be before "the brilliant and more theoretical mind of the liberal" would collide with "the steadier and more practical mind of the conservative." The organization, he claimed, benefited from both, but the problem lay in the fact "that neither is likely to recognize his own limitations or his partner's assets."¹²

The heart of the clash between the two men involved the extent to which Coughlinites and others whom Flynn branded as extremists were to be allowed into the organization. As seen in the preceding chapter, Flynn was devoted to keeping them out, and in this he had the backing of most of the executive committee of the national organization—particularly Wood and Stuart. Webster, however, believed that the AFC should seek a broader base of support by cooperating with any group that opposed intervention, and he pursued this strategy in those parts of the chapter that Flynn allowed him to direct.¹³

The Street Speakers' Bureau was a case in point. The bureau employed roughly five hundred speakers, about a dozen of whom were sent out each night to give speeches on street corners around Manhattan. Webster took responsibility for this arm of the organization, although Flynn later concluded that his "lack of discretion . . . made him the worst possible man for the job." Webster placed in charge of the bureau a local preacher;

a “singularly odd creature,” wrote Flynn, who soon displayed “incredibly bad judgment and questionable behavior.” Soon the chair was receiving complaints about bureau speakers making anti-Semitic and pro-fascist statements. In addition, Wood himself contacted Flynn, asking him to look into the presence of “degenerates” (i.e., homosexuals) in the bureau. The chair immediately fired the preacher, but to Flynn’s horror this same individual turned up in a position of authority in the Brooklyn chapter of America First, thanks to “a glowing letter of recommendation from Webster.”¹⁴

By late summer, Flynn had become convinced that Webster was “tragically and hopelessly incompetent.” However, Webster had some important allies on the committee who shared his views, namely, the treasurer, Wall Street banker H. Dudley Swim, and executive committee member Amos Pinchot. Swim, like Webster, was a longtime conservative. Pinchot, however, had been a Bull Moose Republican and a founder of the American Civil Liberties Union who had at one time written for the socialist newspaper *The Masses*. Like Flynn, he had become disenchanted with the New Deal, although he viewed it as heading toward socialism (rather than fascism, as Flynn believed), and by the late 1930s he had aligned himself with the ultraconservative National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government. None of the three completely trusted Flynn, whom they believed to harbor radical views; nor did they appreciate the heavy-handed manner in which he controlled the chapter. However, through the summer they kept their complaints to themselves.¹⁵

It was not until Lindbergh delivered his Des Moines speech that open warfare broke out in the chapter. Flynn wrote that he arrived in the office the next day to find it in disarray; those who engaged “in daily eruption against the Jews were uproariously delighted,” while others who, like Flynn, hoped to avoid the “Jewish issue” were depressed. The telephones kept ringing all day, some callers offering paeans of praise for the aviator’s remarks, others threatening to resign. Many of the same anti-Semites whom Flynn had worked so hard at keeping out of the chapter apparently viewed the speech as a signal that they should try again and showed up at the office in large numbers. It took all the chair’s tact and diplomacy, he would later recall, just to keep the chapter from falling apart altogether.¹⁶

Flynn’s efforts to get the national committee to distance itself from Lindbergh’s remarks have already been recounted. What he did not know at the time was that Webster, Swim, and Pinchot were all working behind

his back to prevent this from occurring. Webster assured the aviator that the vast majority of the organization's membership was in full agreement with his attitude toward the Jews. Swim wrote Wood denouncing any thought of "repudiation or even apology" as "unthinkable," as it would be "construed as an admission of guilt." Pinchot mentioned Flynn specifically; the chair, he wrote to Wood, was "tremendously able and useful" but tended to get excited "over comparatively inconsequential things, and suffers from some apprehension that his erstwhile radical friends will disapprove his course."¹⁷

The three men were apparently emboldened by the national committee's refusal to follow Flynn's recommendations regarding Lindbergh. According to Flynn, Webster and Pinchot began telling members of the New York City chapter that their chairman had demanded the aviator's resignation over the issue, which was patently untrue. Flynn also complained that Webster was openly encouraging the street speakers in their extreme rhetoric, which by the end of September was "violent and hysterical." The Street Speakers' Bureau, he believed, had become Webster's means for bringing extremists into the organization, and Flynn finally opted to close this window by shutting the bureau down altogether.¹⁸

The battle between Webster—quietly backed by Swim and Pinchot—and Flynn was a constant source of headaches for the AFC leadership in Chicago. Stuart and Wood both recognized that the tension was undermining the effectiveness of what had once been the organization's most powerful chapter. At the same time, they were unwilling to take sides. Flynn insisted that he could not "stand Webster messing things up . . . indefinitely" and on several occasions threatened to resign. Wood and Stuart agreed that they could not allow this to happen; after all, it was Flynn's drive and organizational skills that had made the chapter what it was. However, they were loath to alienate Webster, even when it became clear that he was plotting with his allies to limit Flynn's authority. He had sacrificed too much for the organization to be removed, Wood argued, and moreover he served as a valuable connection to many in the New York business community. Therefore they did their best to prevent a "serious blow-up," conferring with both men privately, sending emissaries—including Norman Thomas—to try to negotiate a *modus vivendi*, and even offering Webster a fundraising position in Chicago (he turned it down). But such efforts were no more than temporary measures, so that by late November, Stuart was predicting an "explosion [was] imminent."¹⁹

Of course, the ongoing battle between Flynn and Webster did not help the chapter in its efforts against the administration's foreign policy. In October, in response to German submarine attacks on American vessels, Roosevelt gave an order authorizing U.S. naval vessels to "shoot on sight" any U-boats they encountered. Flynn immediately objected, calling the order a "shocking usurpation of power" as a de facto declaration of war without congressional approval. The administration, he claimed, had been "asking for these attacks" by deliberately sending destroyers into hostile waters. At Flynn's recommendation, Senator Nye introduced a resolution asking for information about the activities of one of the ships so attacked, the U.S.S. *Greer*. As a result, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold R. Stark, admitted that the destroyer had been shadowing the U-boat for several hours, radioing its position to the Royal Navy. For Flynn, this served as confirmation that the American people were "victims of a conspiracy to hurry them into this war."²⁰

The president also asked Congress to revise the neutrality laws so as to allow the arming of merchant ships, a proposal to which Flynn also objected. On October 23 the writer made yet another appearance on Capitol Hill to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Arming merchant vessels, he told those in attendance, was "an excellent way to expose them to more deadly forms of attack," which was precisely what the administration hoped would happen. A week later he and other speakers emphasized this issue before an audience of some twenty thousand at what would prove to be the New York City chapter's final rally, held in Madison Square Garden.²¹

Yet, like so many of America First's efforts, the fight against the arming of merchant ships ultimately failed, although Flynn consoled himself with the fact that the vote in the Senate was far closer than that over lend-lease in March. At this point many both in America First's leadership (including Amos Pinchot) and in the rank and file began to grow restless, insisting on some more direct form of protest against the administration's foreign policy. Specifically, there was talk of holding a massive march on Washington in order to demonstrate the continuing strength of anti-interventionist sentiment. But while Flynn seems to have toyed with this idea in August, he was by November convinced that such a strategy was more likely to do harm than good. Instead, he argued that it was better for the AFC to pursue a "course of 'piping down.'" Issues of domestic policy, such as taxes and inflation, were moving to the fore, and by holding off for a while the pro-interventionists would have "a chance to sink

their teeth into each other without being restrained by the common enemy.” He suggested instead that members concentrate on writing to their senators and congressmen, and he recommended to the national committee that the organization expand its publicity operation by writing short articles for newspapers and trade magazines.²²

It is not exactly clear why Flynn chose to advocate a more conservative course for America First in the final weeks of 1941, but it is likely that Lindbergh’s Des Moines speech played a role here as well. Flynn had never fully trusted the organization’s rank-and-file membership, remaining convinced that it had been infiltrated by both extremists and agents provocateurs who were secretly in the employ of pro-interventionist groups. This explains his insistence on keeping power in the New York City chapter centralized in his own hands. Moreover, he was probably aware by this point that the administration had authorized the Federal Bureau of Investigation to look into the activities of anti-interventionist organizations. Given the enthusiastic support that so many America Firsters showed for Lindbergh’s remarks in September, Flynn had good cause for worry that even the group’s most responsible leaders would be unable to control something as large and dramatic as a march on Washington. A spontaneous display of anti-Semitism or an expression of admiration for Hitler or Mussolini by some irresponsible party would be all that the president would need to convince the American people that his opponents were dangerous fanatics.

Whether a more aggressive strategy in November 1941 would have made a difference is moot, of course, since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the German and Italian declarations of war four days later ended the debate over U.S. entry into the war once and for all. America First had never said much about Japan or Pacific affairs, but Flynn was not silent on the subject. In an article that he wrote for *Reader’s Digest* he claimed that “Japan would never dream of carrying a war to these shores,” as its interests lay entirely in Asia. The only reason for the Japanese to attack the United States would be if they were provoked. As he wrote in a press statement issued on December 6—the very day before Pearl Harbor—the Roosevelt administration was making unreasonable demands on Tokyo. If there was a breakdown in relations between the two countries, it would be the White House that was “completely responsible.”²³

The moment Flynn heard the news of the Pearl Harbor attack, he was determined that the America First Committee dissolve immediately, even

though he found the prospect no more pleasant “than eating dry ashes.” The national committee, however, was less certain and set an emergency meeting for December 11. Moreover, on the day after the attack Stuart sent a letter to all chapter heads, asking them to consult with their executive committees and send back their recommendations on the future of the organization. They were given four options: (1) complete dissolution; (2) “adjournment,” which meant suspending all current activities but “leaving the organization intact” with the possibility of serving as a “loyal opposition” at some future date; (3) “continued opposition to entry into the European war” “an option soon rendered moot by the German and Italian declarations of war”; and (4) “support of national defense and the war effort.” The national committee, Stuart promised, would take this feedback from the chapters into consideration before making any final decision.²⁴

Over the next few days the Chicago headquarters was inundated with telegrams from the local chapters. In the end, only nine supported the full dissolution of America First; the vast majority favored “adjournment” instead. But Flynn insisted that every day the organization remained in existence, the greater the likelihood that it would be accused of undermining the war effort. Indeed, he had not even waited until the national committee meeting to order all the chapters and subchapters under his control to close their headquarters and cancel all planned meetings and events. “There is no course open to us now,” he wrote, “save, as true Americans, to accept the fact of war and do all we can to support this country . . . in war for the same reason that we tried to keep it out of war.” It was imperative that members “do nothing which, even by implication, can give our enemies the slightest reason to put a stain upon the good name of a noble cause.”²⁵

The debate made the December 11 meeting a raucous affair, as several members of the national committee argued strongly in favor of adjournment over dissolution—and among these were Webster and Pinchot. Flynn, however, promised to resign if the organization remained in existence, and Wood and three others joined him in this threat. At that point Stuart and a majority of the others present recognized the danger in continuing and voted to liquidate America First completely.²⁶

But if Flynn thought that this was the end of the episode, he was sorely mistaken. Unlike other chapter heads, he had not consulted with his executive committee before ordering the closing of headquarters and cessation of operations. Several subchapters, therefore, defied his order,

perhaps with encouragement from Webster and Pinchot. Flynn responded by hiring movers to take the furniture out of several headquarters. In the case of one particularly intransigent subchapter, Flynn ended up hiring a detective agency to post a guard at the headquarters, with orders “to let no one into the premises under any circumstances without a written order signed by me.”²⁷

On December 22, Flynn informed Wood that all the New York chapters were “either completely liquidated or are in process of liquidating their affairs.” However, he was hearing disturbing rumblings about Webster and his allies. The chapter secretary, he learned, was engaged in “frantic efforts” to obtain the chapter’s list of donors. Meanwhile Dudley Swim, the treasurer, had managed to get hold of the chapter’s accounting ledgers. Flynn also found out that Webster had in the previous week hosted a party in his home. Allegedly it was in honor of his new fiancée—they were married the following year—but Flynn grew suspicious when he heard about the guest list. Those present, it turned out, included Lindbergh, Swim, Pinchot, and several other leading AFC members who had opposed dissolution, as well as several individuals reputedly connected with extremist organizations. He was particularly horrified when he read that several local newspapers were playing it up “as a formal postwar America First gathering.” Webster, he concluded, was plotting to rebuild the organization.²⁸

This was bad news for Flynn, but it was only the beginning of his troubles. For months, pro-interventionist groups had been claiming that America First was being funded by Berlin, and in January he received word that he was likely to be called by the Dies Committee, and perhaps by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as well, to testify about his chapter’s finances. However, when he asked Swim to provide him with the necessary information the treasurer hesitated, claiming that a full list of receipts and expenditures was still in the process of being prepared. Flynn became angry, sending Swim an abusive letter complaining of the “deplorable manner” in which the committee’s accounting had been handled. Swim promptly passed the letter on to Pinchot, calling it “perfectly outrageous” and speculating that the author must be “under some frightful mental strain.” Pinchot agreed and suggested to Flynn that “the tone and content” of his recent communications “seem to indicate you need a rest.”²⁹

Flynn responded with a letter in which all his pent-up anger toward Webster, Swim, and Pinchot came pouring out. “You will never again,”

he began, “as long as you live, Amos, feel as well rested as I feel now.” He had known all along that Pinchot had been plotting against him, but he had remained silent for the sake of keeping the peace in the chapter. Now, however, things were different. The battle against intervention was over, and “I do not have to put up with you any longer.”³⁰

Perhaps his outburst made him feel a bit better, but it did nothing to solve his problems. He was outraged when he received a letter from a woman he had never heard of, but who identified herself as “assistant secretary” of the America First Committee, notifying him of a meeting of the executive committee in mid-February. Moreover, Webster and Swim were refusing to hand over the chapter’s financial records. They told Wood that they needed to keep them until the Treasury Department determined whether or not they would have to pay income taxes from the previous year, and they complained that Flynn had become “so high strung and excitable that it was almost impossible to get a reasonable understanding with him.” Flynn called this “an unmixed falsehood.” “There is something funny and fishy at the bottom of this thing,” he told Wood, “but I certainly am not going to submit myself to questioning by the F.B.I. or the Dies Committee thus left in the dark about the touchiest subject in our whole movement.”³¹

The dispute continued throughout the spring of 1942 and was not resolved until June, when Wood pointed out to Webster and Swim that the New York City chapter was the only one in the country that had not yet formally dissolved and should do so immediately. On June 22, Webster informed Wood that the chapter had no outstanding tax bill, and formal dissolution took place on July 2. It would appear that Flynn’s fears were ultimately ill founded. Contrary to what he had heard, he was never called to testify regarding the committee’s finances. Moreover, if there really was an effort to reconstitute the organization under new leadership, nothing came of it. It turned out that the February meeting to which he had been invited was merely to report on the closing of the various headquarters.³²

Flynn’s involvement with the America First Committee would prove to be another turning point in his career. There is no doubt that he became one of the best-known anti-interventionists in the country and in the process made some friends who would remain close to him for the rest of his life. Chief among these was Robert E. Wood, who claimed he had “never met a man who was more willing to sacrifice for what he believed to be right.” But his participation came at a high price. From June

through December 1941 the committee's work absorbed, by his own admission, "every minute of my time." His output as a writer dropped off to almost nothing, not counting AFC press releases. In 1940, in addition to his column in the *New Republic*, no fewer than twelve of his articles had run in some of the country's top magazines; by contrast, only four of his pieces appeared in 1941, and three of those ran in right-wing publications such as the *American Mercury* and *Scribner's Commentator*. Finally, his high profile in the AFC—which in the eyes of nearly everyone was a right-wing organization—finally destroyed whatever reputation he still had as a liberal. Now that the fight over intervention was over, Flynn was forced to deal with the unenviable task of finding some new role for himself in wartime America.³³

The Smear Offensive

While it is impossible to identify a single event or revelation that caused Flynn to move from being a liberal muckraking journalist to an icon of the Far Right, it is clear that the 1940s were critical to this transformation. As early as the late 1930s (see Chapter 7) the writer was becoming disillusioned with mainstream liberalism, as it had become closely identified with the New Deal. However, during the time of his affiliation with America First he was constantly being identified as part of the “liberal wing” of the anti-interventionist movement. Furthermore, as the previous chapter indicates, his very public association with liberal causes—the defense of Bertrand Russell not least among them—made it difficult for conservatives in the New York City chapter of America First to trust him. By the end of the decade, however, there seemed to be no doubt about his political leanings, as he placed himself squarely in the front ranks of the battle against communist subversion.

The more immediate question for Flynn in 1942, though, was how to rebuild his career. Both of his regular columns—“Plain Economics” and “Other People’s Money”—had been canceled in the previous two years, and his intense involvement with the campaign against overseas intervention had left him precious little time for writing. Moreover, the contacts he had made during his years with America First were mainly conservative businessmen such as Robert E. Wood and H. Smith Richardson—neither of whom could be of much help in placing Flynn’s byline in mainstream journals. Finally, during this time he faced serious health problems; that summer he was hospitalized with an intestinal blockage that rendered him incapable of working for the better part of three months.¹

When Flynn finally was able to resume writing, he found few doors open to him. He mailed letters to a series of newspapers and syndicates, proposing that he write for them a thrice-weekly column of five hundred

to six hundred words on “political, international, [and] economic subjects,” but there were no takers. His dealings with magazines were not much better. Conservative-leaning journals such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Reader’s Digest* (particularly the latter) were open to his work, but major publications such as *Collier’s* brushed him off with polite rejections. Frederick Allen of *Harper’s* insisted that, despite having “intensely” disagreed with Flynn on foreign affairs, he still welcomed the writer’s submissions. However, to Flynn’s mounting fury Allen shot down one story idea after another in 1943 and 1944. Finally, in early 1945, the writer expressed his frustration in a letter that, at the last moment, he decided not to send.

[I]n order to make good on your tender fiction that you are open to suggestions from me, you are willing to put me to the futile pains of writing more of them and yourself to the trouble of inventing further reasons for refusing them. I shall find a means, somehow, of being heard.²

No one in the publishing world seemed willing to give Flynn an outlet for his views, and the writer blamed this on the smear campaign that had been waged against him and America First throughout the previous year. The accusations leveled against the AFC (see Chapter 9) had a sort of “coherence and unity” that led him to suspect they “were not sporadic or casual but that they originated in some central or unified group.” Although the pro-intervention forces had lacked serious popular support, they were never at a loss for funds, and often they seemed capable of responding to America First’s arguments before they were even made. Ultimately Flynn concluded that there was a “central directing force” behind the campaign to discredit anti-interventionists, and while he was certain that it was somehow connected with the administration—he specifically pointed to Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish as a key player—he was unclear who or what lay at the very heart. He would pledge himself in the next several years to uncover this conspiracy, and his investigation would play a critical role in his embrace by the Right. In the meantime, it was critical for those who had been part of the anti-interventionist movement to make sure that their side of the story was told.³

The writer’s one tangible opportunity in 1942 was with the Republican Party. Though he never formally joined that party, it was perhaps inevitable that his hatred of the New Deal would lead him to put aside any qualms and join forces with the one major political organization that

was—on paper at least—dedicated to fighting it. His transition was eased by his friend and fellow author Clarence Buddington Kelland, who late in 1941 became head of the publicity department of the Republican National Committee. In a letter to Kelland, Flynn called “the defeat of Roosevelt and the New Deal” in the 1942 elections “one of the most important jobs that has ever confronted this country.” However, this goal could not be accomplished using “the ordinary run-of-the-mine publicity methods”; what was needed was a “propaganda enterprise of the highest order,” capable of “planting three or four ideas in the minds of the people.” While Flynn had no intention of heading this effort, he was clearly prepared to assist in any organized campaign to defeat the New Deal, “which I believe is a prelude to fascism.”⁴

Thus began Flynn’s brief (two-year) period of informal employment with the GOP. The sort of campaign he recommended to Kelland—a concentrated media blitz emphasizing a handful of simple ideas, repeated over and over again—was one that would be used to great effect in 1942 and many times thereafter. Flynn also suggested making a concerted effort to win over the African American vote. Roosevelt, he claimed, had “played a very clever and successful game with the Negro vote,” by promising “the Negro . . . a squarer deal in his political and civil life.” However, there was no escaping the fact that Southern Democrats still controlled all the important congressional committees. Once it became obvious that the New Deal was incapable of living up to its promises, the Republicans should be prepared to reap the benefits.⁵

Yet it was not long before Flynn ran into the same problem with the Republican Party that he had with the New Deal in 1933 and the LaGuardia administration in New York later in that decade, namely, that politicians were often inclined to sacrifice what he considered to be vital principles in the name of compromise and expediency. He was particularly concerned about reports that former presidential candidate Wendell Willkie was trying to move the party to the left, offering Americans a somewhat more conservative version of the New Deal. Willkie and his supporters—“the amateur gilded youths,” Flynn called them—were few in number, but GOP regulars were afraid to resist them for fear of causing a split in the party. If nothing were done to stop “Willkie’s gang,” he wrote to a Republican congressman in April, the party would be “ready for the cleaners—at the moment when it could be most useful to the country.”⁶

Nevertheless, Flynn still saw the GOP as the best hope to stop the New Deal, particularly after the 1942 elections produced a stunning victory for

Republicans, and conservatives in particular. The party, which in the mid-1930s had been reduced to virtual impotence, captured forty-four seats in the House (exceeding Flynn's prediction of thirty) and nine in the Senate. In Roosevelt's home state of New York, Thomas E. Dewey became the first Republican governor since the early 1920s and was already being talked about as a presidential contender for 1944.⁷

By the end of the year some new opportunities had opened up for Flynn. DeWitt Wallace of *Reader's Digest* hired him as a "roving editor" to write a series of articles on the administration's plans for the postwar world. His fee—\$2,500 an article, plus an unlimited expense account—would take care of his family's immediate financial needs and would give him time to finish his latest book project, which he was tentatively calling "Prologue to Fascism." Finally, in early 1943 he hired an enterprising young agent named Clark H. Getts to seek out opportunities on the radio and the lecture circuit. Getts's commission was high—40 percent for lectures, 25 percent on radio and other engagements—but soon he proved his worth by orchestrating a ten-week lecture tour through the Midwest. Flynn was asked to speak on a variety of subjects and was to receive an honorarium of between \$200 and \$400 for each one.⁸

Flynn used his lecture tour—and whatever journalistic outlets remained available to him—to hammer on a number of themes, but chief among them was the danger of the national debt. The New Deal had already produced record peacetime budget deficits, and now that the country was at war, the debt was skyrocketing. Flynn estimated that if the debt continued to accumulate at its present rate, interest payments alone would soon amount to \$5 billion a year, which is "more than we have ever collected in any one year in income taxes in all our history until this year [1942]." If this were allowed to occur, he predicted that taxes would have to be raised to dangerously high levels, so that little of the nation's income would be available for private investment. Industries would begin to suffer, and government would have to step in more and more to save them. In short, capitalism itself would ultimately collapse.⁹

Flynn's proposed solution was similar to that which he had advocated in the 1930s: forcing Americans to "pay as they go" for the war through higher taxation. He was careful to point out that his fears that taxes might crowd out private investment applied only to peacetime; during a war, private investment "is practically suspended" while government contracts dominate the economy. The administration's approach was simply to tax "excess profits" that came from military contracts, but for

Flynn this was wholly insufficient. To avoid the disaster of a massive post-war debt, income taxes had to be raised for all corporations and individuals, not just war contractors. “The government has appropriated 162 billion dollars for the war,” he wrote to Sen. Homer T. Bone, his old friend from the Nye Committee.

What in Hell difference does it make whether we raise 13 or 14 or 20 or 25 billion by taxes? We are going to be submerged under an ocean of bank credit and it is a good deal like discussing whether a man ought to be drowned in a 20-foot tank or a 30-foot tank. We are in for drowning.¹⁰

Flynn professed to be particularly alarmed at the theories being propounded by Harvard economists such as Alvin H. Hansen and Richard V. Gilbert. The goal of these men, Flynn claimed, was to turn government into “the Great Investor” through deficit spending. They did not believe that government debts ever had to be paid; they could simply be covered up through tricky bookkeeping practices. But if their prescriptions were followed, the government would end up becoming the most powerful force in American life. “Who will contend against a regime,” he wrote in the *Saturday Evening Post*, “which has ever in its hands constantly growing cataracts of billions to spend on every man’s business and in every man’s town and in every congressman’s district?”¹¹

Flynn’s increasing concern about the expanding power of the federal government connected well to a theme he had developed in the late 1930s—that the New Deal was paving the way for an American form of fascism. At that time he had begun work on a book on that subject, but his involvement in the fight against overseas intervention interfered. However, in 1943 he dedicated himself to the completion of the task, and the final product—*As We Go Marching*—was published by Doubleday, Doran early the following year. To those familiar with Flynn’s writings, the basic point was not new. The administration’s policies, the book claimed, bore marked similarities to fascism in that both emphasized deficit spending to prop up investment, both worked in partnership with private industry in order to ensure efficient production, and both ultimately turned to war as an economic stimulus and a means of rallying popular support. However, the book was more than a simple rehash of his earlier columns. In some ways it was remarkably learned, drawing on sources as diverse as Oswald Spengler, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Thorstein

Veblen. Moreover, it laid out in great detail the course of fascism in both Italy and Germany, with an eye to showing the similarity of the path the New Deal had taken thus far.¹²

Flynn identified one of the key aspects of fascism as the accretion of power into the hands of a single individual, such as Mussolini or Hitler. In an argument that presaged the claims of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in the 1970s and after,¹³ he claimed that this process was well underway in America: the White House had, during the course of Roosevelt's presidency, come to eclipse the other branches of government. To check the tendency toward autocracy, Flynn proposed a reinvigoration of the legislature, an argument he put forward in a brief book entitled *Meet Your Congress* that appeared later in 1944. Also published by Doubleday, Doran, the book suggested that Congress should reassert its authority by stripping executive bureaus of their power to regulate, and by making it clear that they "will tolerate no usurpations of its power by the Executive."¹⁴

As We Go Marching initially did quite well; in its first few weeks it sold roughly fifty thousand copies, and bookstores in Indianapolis, New Orleans, and St. Louis cited it among their six top-selling titles. But this flurry of interest did not last long, and by the end of the year sales had dropped to practically nothing. *Meet Your Congress* performed even more dismally, its national sales figures barely registering. Flynn admitted that the books did not appear at an opportune time; after all, convincing Americans that they were on the road to fascism at a time when they were engaged in an all-out war against the Axis was a hard sell indeed. However, he also blamed his publisher for the poor sales, claiming that Doubleday, Doran had done too little to promote either book. It was not the first time he had made such a claim—it will be recalled that he accused Simon and Schuster of "suppressing" *Men of Wealth* in 1941—but it would further convince him that the publishing world was part of a larger conspiracy to silence him.¹⁵

Yet, as disappointing as the sales figures were, *As We Go Marching* and *Meet Your Congress* were hardly ignored by literary critics; indeed, they were among the most-reviewed books of the year, and the nature of those reviews says a great deal about how Flynn's politics were viewed by his contemporaries. His fellow antiwar liberals—men such as Frederick Libby and Oswald Garrison Villard—were enthusiastic, with Villard in particular hailing *As We Go Marching* as "the most important book which has appeared since the war began." They were also well received

among conservatives. Walter Trohan of the *Chicago Tribune* called Flynn “one of the outstanding reporters of this era” and recommended *As We Go Marching* to “every one interested in the future of his country.” Benjamin De Casseres, the chief critic for the Hearst newspaper chain, included it on his list of the best books of the year. Moreover, letters poured in from prominent conservatives such as aeronautical tycoon Igor Sikorsky and industrialist William Henry Regnery—men who would certainly not have been among Flynn’s fans in the 1930s. Merwin K. Hart, a prominent New York lawyer with alleged ties to Franco’s Spain, proposed a massive campaign to place *As We Go Marching* in the hands of every prominent Republican, in order to prevent the GOP from drifting toward the left.¹⁶

Liberal reviewers were far less enthusiastic, as foreseen by Robert Wood, who predicted that they would use the same tactics that had “been used against other books coming from real American authors.” Sydney Justin Harris of the pro-Roosevelt *Chicago Sun-Times* dismissed *As We Go Marching* as “an exercise in literary futility and a confession of spiritual impotence,” awarding it with the title of “Most Malignant Book of 1944.” A review of *Meet Your Congress* in the *Oklahoma City Oklahoman* denounced Flynn as “a crotchety old man who is fearful of democratic strength and popular decision.” Some, like Sterling North of the *Washington Post* and Malcolm Cowley at the *New Republic*, claimed that Flynn failed to understand that the “essence” of fascism was repression, and that this was conspicuously absent in the United States. “The vicious nonsense which he spread while he was an America Firster,” North wrote, “would have put him in jail if America were really as Fascist as he believes.” Hal Borland, writing in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, insisted that the author was “in a perpetual state of discouragement,” reminding his readers that Flynn had claimed in 1941 that it would take many years for the country to build up a military force capable of taking on the Axis powers.¹⁷

Such reviews convinced Flynn that the smear campaign that had been directed against him and other anti-interventionists in 1941 remained in full swing. Clark Getts provided him with more evidence, as several of his lectures were abruptly canceled in the face of public protest. A Jewish group in Tulsa demanded that Flynn be denied a public forum, claiming that he was “an anti-Semite and an isolationist.” A local newspaper in Youngstown organized opposition to his appearance there, branding him “a tool of big interests,” while a petition circulated at the University of

Illinois asked that his talk be dropped “to save the lives of our soldiers which will be needlessly sacrificed if the war is prolonged by disunity among the Allies.”¹⁸

The real bombshell arrived in the summer of 1943, when a book called *Under Cover* appeared in print. Its author, who identified himself as John Roy Carlson, claimed to have spent months investigating the groups opposed to American intervention in World War II. His conclusion, as trumpeted on the book jacket, was shocking: “Axis agents and our enemies within are now plotting to destroy the United States.” It suggested a massive conspiracy, ultimately directed from Berlin, that involved not only America First (which the book referred to as “America’s Doom Squad”) but also the German-American Bund, Father Charles Coughlin’s National Union for Social Justice, and the Christian Mobilizers.¹⁹

Given the rage that *Under Cover* would provoke in Flynn, it is perhaps surprising to learn that the author did not portray him in a negative light. It retold the story of the February 20, 1941 rally at the Mecca Temple, where Joe McWilliams had been in attendance (see Chapter 9). It recounted how Flynn took to the podium to “vilify McWilliams with a sincerity that was unmistakable” and even praised the writer for his “courageous stand.” Nevertheless, Carlson’s verdict on America First—in whose Madison Avenue office he spent several weeks working as a volunteer—was harsh. Most of those who volunteered there had been women, mothers who “stayed away from their homes,” so that “family life was disrupted in a crusade for peace at any sell-out price.” While he admitted that there were “many in the America First Committee who were sincere and devout . . . the overwhelming majority were fascist party-liners.” During his time as a volunteer, he had repeatedly heard disparaging remarks made about Jews and insisted that “Coughlinites and Bundists” made regular appearances at the Madison Avenue office. Even as he told the story of Flynn’s denunciation of McWilliams, he claimed that the crowd gathered in the Mecca Temple sympathized more with McWilliams than with Flynn.²⁰

Under Cover became one of the year’s biggest sellers; its publishers at one point claimed that if paper were not being rationed they could easily sell 2 million copies. The book outraged many a former anti-interventionist, but none more than Flynn. It was exactly the sort of backlash that he had expected ever since Pearl Harbor, the beginnings of a campaign “to raise the posse comitatus after everybody who disagreed with the President’s foreign policy.” Moreover, he was determined to fight back. “I

think the time is now here for a determined all-out assault,” he wrote to Senator Burton Wheeler, whom the book had portrayed in a particularly unflattering light. “Attack must be met with attack—vigorous and relentless. If this is done I think you will [be] surprised at how these rats will run to cover.”²¹

When Wheeler introduced a resolution calling for an investigation of *Under Cover* and its author, Flynn immediately offered to direct the project. He soon discovered that the author’s name was actually Avedis Derounian and that he was closely associated with the Friends of Democracy, the same group that had issued “The Nazi Transmission Belt” in March 1941. Flynn also suspected that Derounian’s work had been secretly supported by the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith and by the Communist Party. He summarized his preliminary findings in a document entitled “The Smear Offensive: A Report,” which he issued in March 1944. In it he charged the author with using the old smear tactic of “guilt by association,” that is, by using tenuous links and overlapping memberships to establish a connection between mainstream anti-interventionists and “a handful of crackpot groups.”²²

However, Flynn made it clear that any further investigation should not focus narrowly on *Under Cover*, which was merely one front in a much larger smear campaign. He proposed a counteroffensive designed “to put the Friends of Democracy out of business completely” by putting pressure on members of the organization’s board of directors. For example, Frank Graham, president of the University of North Carolina, might be put under pressure by the university’s trustees; Flynn suggested asking prominent North Carolina politicians “to write to these trustees and ask them why the name of the University is being used by its president to add prestige to a disreputable organization.” There were others whom the writer knew personally, such as Ordway Tead, and Flynn was confident that “I can make these men soon realize that they are in bad company.”²³

Flynn believed that the Congress also had to be involved, but given that Flynn had quickly consumed the preliminary budget that Wheeler had made available for his committee’s investigation, he had to find some other option. He decided to turn to the House Committee on Un-American Activities, then chaired by Texas Democrat Martin Dies. The committee had just received a new appropriation of \$75,000 and had a large staff of investigators already in place. Moreover, Dies seemed a natural ally, since he himself had recently felt the sting of the smear campaign. When radio personality Walter Winchell suggested on the air that the

congressman had ties to pro-fascist elements, Dies demanded and received equal time to rebut the charges and asked Flynn to write the speech. Both men were satisfied to learn that soon afterward Winchell's sponsors forbade him from making further reference in his radio program to members of Congress, leading Flynn to comment that this "poisonous reptile is liquidated so far as the air is concerned." Grateful for the writer's services and eager to strike a further blow at those who had tried to embarrass him, Dies quickly set his sights on what Flynn was calling the "Smear Bund."²⁴

It would not be until after the war that the congressional investigation would go into high gear, but in the meantime another cooperative venture between Flynn and Dies was developing. In early April 1944 the writer informed Wood that he was nearly finished with "a book, the reverse of 'Under Cover,'" which would reveal the true extent of the smear campaign. Although Flynn was the author, he was given access to all the files of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and for publicity purposes the book would appear under Dies's name. To keep news of the partnership from reaching public attention, the two men were working through a middleman, an advertising executive named George Washington Robnett. Robnett was executive secretary of the ultraconservative Church League of America, a group he had helped to found in 1937 to fight perceived communist infiltration of mainline Protestant denominations.²⁵

No manuscript of this proposed work exists (though it will be argued in the next chapter that it formed the basis for Flynn's 1949 work *The Road Ahead*), but Flynn's description of it indicates that this was a major departure for the author. While no defender of communism, he had long ridiculed the idea that communism was a threat to America. Actual communists were a tiny, isolated group of radicals who were more dedicated to fighting each other than they were to overthrowing capitalism. Indeed, in March 1943 he had written that fighting communism in America was "a waste of time," since the real threat to the country was fascism—an argument he also made explicitly in *As We Go Marching*. Yet Flynn informed Wood that the book he was ghostwriting for Dies placed "special stress on the Communists." No doubt he saw this as the only way of keeping the Texas Democrat involved in the project, and thus the most effective way of targeting what Flynn called "the real offenders": the Roosevelt administration and groups such as the Anti-Defamation League

and the Friends of Democracy. Nevertheless, it was his first step on the road to becoming one of the country's premier red-baiters.²⁶

The project as envisioned never found its way into print. Doubleday, Doran had originally offered a contract, but upon receiving the completed manuscript that summer the firm changed its mind. Flynn then shopped it around to several other major publishers, but in each case the answer was the same: it would no doubt be a wonderful book, but the author would have to find "someone with more courage" to publish it. Flynn was livid, and his correspondence concerning this episode shows a heretofore hidden streak of anti-Semitism. He concluded that no important publishing house would handle the book because they were "largely at the mercy" of the largest bookstore chains, nearly all of whom were owned and managed by Jews. The publishing industry, in short, was caught in a "strange semitic web" that would prevent any reputable press from printing an exposé of the anti-American conspiracy.²⁷

In spite of the rejections, Flynn was inclined to keep up the fight and decided to try to raise enough money to publish the book on his own. Robert Wood invited him to Chicago to make a presentation before a meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers. Several of businessmen in attendance were impressed, and a number of them—including H. Smith Richardson, Sewell Avery of Montgomery Ward, Sterling Morton of the Morton Salt Company, and Colonel Robert McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as Wood himself—promised to support the project with substantial monetary contributions. Flynn therefore gleefully informed Dies that thanks to "our friends in Chicago" the book could appear in print.²⁸

Dies, however, refused to go along with the deal. The contributions of the Chicago businessmen would not have been enough to provide him with the large advance that he had been promised in the now-void contract with Doubleday, Doran. Moreover, Dies wanted the book to appear in stores before the November election, and there was no way that even a major publishing house could have it ready by then. He therefore informed Flynn that he preferred "to tell my story through speeches and reports to Congress." The writer was disappointed, complaining that the congressman had "behaved pretty sadly"; in the end, like Franklin Roosevelt and Fiorello LaGuardia, Dies had let him down by allowing political maneuvering and personal ambition to interfere with "the cause." However, Flynn pledged that his work would not go to waste. As he

wrote to Robnett, it could “perhaps lay the groundwork for dealing in a larger way with the whole problem.” The important thing was that the members of the “Smear Bund” got what they deserved. The more that they attacked Flynn and his allies, he predicted ominously in a letter to Burton Wheeler, “the more it is going to react against them when this war is over.”²⁹

In fact, Flynn had yet another project in mind, one that had the potential to be even more explosive than the ill-fated Dies collaboration. Late in 1943 he had begun to collect information about the events leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor. An independent investigation had determined that the local army and navy commanders, General Walter C. Short and Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, had allowed their forces to be caught unawares by the Japanese air strike, in spite of repeated warnings from Washington. Flynn was not convinced. For him, there had always been something fishy about the attack, which had not only brought the United States into the war but also effectively destroyed the anti-interventionist movement. It seemed to have been far too convenient to Franklin Roosevelt’s purposes, and now it appeared that two innocent officers were to be made into scapegoats.³⁰

Flynn summarized his conclusions in a twenty-five-page document, entitled “The Truth about Pearl Harbor.” He sent the piece to Colonel Robert McCormick, who wasted no time in publishing it in its entirety in the Sunday, October 22 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*—in time, he no doubt hoped, to have an impact on the upcoming presidential election. So taken was McCormick with the article that he insisted on starting it on the front page, and it occupied no fewer than seventeen columns in all. Flynn later had the article reprinted in pamphlet form and distributed copies from his office; by the middle of 1945 he estimated that he had sent out nearly one hundred thousand copies. If only he could be assured of an adequate supply of newsprint, he claimed, he could have distributed as many as a million.³¹

Flynn’s thesis in “The Truth about Pearl Harbor” was that the Roosevelt administration, through its “blundering diplomacy and the equally blundering military policy,” had provoked the Japanese into attacking. The president had placed an embargo on oil and other materials that Japan needed to continue its war in China and then made the resumption of trade conditional on the Japanese government making a series of concessions that he knew Tokyo could never accept. Finally, even though the administration realized that relations with Japan were at their breaking

point, it failed to give adequate warning to the commanders at Pearl Harbor. As a result, “two high commanding officers of the United States army and navy have been crucified in order to shield the guilt of the President.”³²

Flynn’s animus against Roosevelt led him to become far more deeply involved in party politics than he ever had been before. Given the Republican victories of 1942, he felt confident that the GOP would retake the White House in 1944. Assuming the Republicans “put up any kind of decent candidate and sensible fight,” he wrote to Wood in April 1943, “the New Deal as such is . . . pretty fully washed up.” At the same time, GOP leaders made an effort to win Flynn over to their side; at one point he was even discussed as a possible campaign manager for General Douglas MacArthur, who was considering a bid for the Republican nomination.³³

It is not clear that Flynn had a favorite candidate among those vying for the nomination in 1944, but it is certain that he was less than impressed with the man who did get the nod, Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York. The nomination was not a surprise—Flynn had predicted it back in 1942—but he found the governor lacking in what he called “sacred fire.” “Even Bob Taft has more spark,” he quipped at one point, making reference to Taft’s legendary dullness. Nevertheless, Flynn agreed to support him actively; he would not be content to give only tacit support to the GOP, as he had in 1940. In the summer of 1944, RNC chairman Herbert Brownell asked for his thoughts on “the best average-man-average-woman argument for turning out Roosevelt and electing Dewey.” Soon he was a formal member of the campaign strategy team, charged in particular with trying to pull Catholic votes away from the Democrats.³⁴

A week before the election, the RNC ran an advertisement that appeared in all the newspapers of the Hearst chain. It was Flynn’s formal endorsement of Dewey, and it started in dramatic fashion: “I AM PROFOUNDLY CONVINCED THIS ELECTION VERY PROBABLY OFFERS THE UNITED STATES HER LAST OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DELIBERATE DECISION AS TO HER DESTINY FOR TWO OR THREE GENERATIONS.” It went on to explain that during the past sixteen years “certain powerful trends” had been moving the country “away from our free form of government and our free system of economic life.” The president and his advisers, the ad claimed, were more than happy to “play the friend of labor and the poor man” but had refused to do the one thing that would bring about economic recovery, that is, help businesses to get back on

their feet. The ad concluded with a line that could have easily been found in the literature of the Liberty League in the mid-1930s: Americans who believed in freedom had a duty “to forget the party allegiances of the past,” as Flynn himself had, “and to crush at the polls the unholy alliance of corrupt politicians interested in jobs and reckless radical zealots interested in revolution.”³⁵

But Flynn’s endorsement of Dewey was not enough to prevent Roosevelt’s election to a fourth term. The writer consoled himself by insisting that, thanks to what the administration had already done, the economy was bound to collapse soon, no matter who was in the White House. As he wrote to DeWitt Wallace of *Reader’s Digest*, “Is it not better that the walls should fall around Roosevelt’s ears and thus leave no doubt in the public mind that his house was no good?” Nevertheless, the whole experience left Flynn thoroughly disgusted with the GOP. The party had erred first of all in nominating someone “who seemed to make all the mistakes Willkie made” by trying to appeal to moderates, instead of building a coalition of anti-New Deal forces in both parties. The campaign, Flynn claimed, “was not very intelligently managed,” specifically pointing to the failure to use any of his own ideas. His conclusion was that the Republicans insisted on waging an old-style, traditional campaign, failing to realize that the rules of political engagement had changed. The problem was no longer merely the Democratic Party but a gigantic propaganda machine that had been “indoctrinating the minds of students, teachers, clergymen, writers,” and even businessmen, without them having any idea that it was happening. The GOP, he believed, was incapable of responding effectively to this challenge.³⁶

A disillusioned Flynn thus ended his brief association with the Republican Party and instead pursued a new strategy for defeating the New Deal. Even before the 1944 campaign had ended, Merwin K. Hart, who had first encountered Flynn at an America First rally, contacted him about a plan to change the intellectual climate of the nation. He proposed establishing a series of “Rightist” ventures—a weekly magazine patterned after the *New Republic*, a book-of-the-month club, a lecture bureau, a publishing house, and so forth—to challenge the “collectivist” ideas that were dominating American intellectual and cultural life. Most of the actual legwork could be handled by existing organizations, such as G. W. Robnett’s Church League of America, Edward Rumely’s Committee for Constitutional Government, and Hart’s own National Economic Council. However, as Flynn explained it, coordinating the activities of such

groups would require a committee “of not more than seven or eight men who have some understanding of the techniques of modern propaganda,” whose goal would be to “lay out a program for reaching every group in the country.” One of these men, it was clear, would be Flynn.³⁷

“[T]he mass American mind has been invaded and occupied by the leaders of a new social philosophy,” Flynn wrote to former *Washington Post* editor Felix Morley in late 1944. It would take more than a political campaign to take it back—it would require nothing less than a cultural and intellectual war. And as the end of World War II approached, Flynn was preparing to wade into combat.³⁸

A Bitter and Disheartening Struggle

From his earliest days as a muckraking journalist, John T. Flynn had been inclined toward conspiracy theories. He had spent a significant chunk of his career investigating real estate salesmen, Wall Street financiers, arms merchants, Hollywood studio heads, and others whom he suspected of plotting against the public interest. However, during World War II he became convinced that a conspiracy existed that was much larger than any of the others he had dealt with in the past—a coalition of individuals and organizations whose activities were coordinated from some mysterious central authority. Moreover, as it was directed against those who dared oppose the New Deal,¹ he believed that this conspiracy had victimized him personally, by “suppressing” his books and keeping his articles out of major magazines. In the years after the war the writer would dedicate himself not only to uncovering the dark forces behind the conspiracy but also to organizing an effective resistance to it. In the process, he placed himself squarely in the corner of postwar ultra-conservatism, even as he continued to insist that he was, and always had been, a liberal.

This emphasis on conspiracy helps to explain why Flynn spent little time during these years writing about the specific issues of the day. While it is clear from his correspondence that he opposed such important initiatives as the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), he did not actively campaign against them as he had against such measures as the NRA and lend-lease. Flynn had reached the conclusion that these merely represented the continuation of the Roosevelt policy of propping up the domestic economy through public spending and war scares. Indeed, he claimed that the policies of the past fifteen-odd years made such measures necessary if a complete economic collapse were

to be avoided. There was, therefore, no sense in trying to stop them as long as the basic structure of the New Deal remained intact.²

Given Flynn's profession, it was natural that he should focus primarily on that part of the conspiracy that most affected him—the media. He had long insisted that the major newspapers, radio stations, and movie production facilities had been coming under the control of a smaller and smaller group of men, and that this proved a danger for American democracy. This had been his argument in the 1930s, when he contended that commercial newspapers had refused to engage in serious investigation of stock market abuses for fear of offending powerful interests; it had also been the major theme of his 1941 investigation of “pro-war” films being produced by Hollywood studios. After the war, he claimed that radio and the movies were the greatest threat America faced. All over the nation, he told a gathering of business executives in 1946, “the most insidious propaganda is being pumped” into the minds of citizens “to deceive them and turn them first against the economic system under which they live and secondly, against the political system under which they live.” The worst part, he told his audience, was that many of these broadcasts were being financed by major American corporations, driven by a misplaced fear that otherwise they would be accused of being pro-fascist.³

Of course, as the branch of the media that affected Flynn most directly, the publishing industry was a particular target of abuse. The most effective journal in the country, he believed, was the *New Republic*, which during the past twelve years had “done more to poison the minds of students in colleges, as well as the faculties, than any other single publication.” Meanwhile, even though mainstream political magazines such as *Harper’s* and the *Atlantic Monthly* were owned by men of conservative views, they were “edited by left-wing New Dealers and exclude those who disagree with this point of view.” The major publishing houses were “either dominated by or sufficiently infiltrated by New Deal influences to block the publication” of books that dared to challenge the administration’s policies. Moreover, even if a publisher dared to print such a work, reviewers in the mainstream newspapers and magazines would immediately either savage it or ignore it altogether, while the major bookstores, which were “controlled by another group I need not mention” (i.e., Jews), would refuse to carry it.⁴

Two developments in particular reinforced Flynn’s belief that sinister forces within the publishing industry were working to suppress alternative views. The first was the reaction to his 1947 book entitled *The Epic*

of Freedom. The book, published by a small press in Philadelphia, was a sweeping history of liberty in Western civilization, beginning with the struggle of the Germanic tribes against the Roman Empire and ending with the American Revolution—all in just over one hundred pages. Its stated goal was to warn Americans that their preoccupation with economic security was causing them to forget the high price that their forefathers had paid to bring about political and economic liberty. The book was completely ignored, and its sales figures were abysmal.⁵

Even more disturbing to Flynn than the failure of *The Epic of Freedom* was an apparent attempt by the Left “to get control of the literary product of the United States.” In 1946 a committee of the Screen Writers Guild issued a proposal to form a centralized institution to represent “all American writers . . . in their business dealings with publishers, with the radio and motion picture industries.” Under this plan all authors would be required to entrust this body—to be called the American Authors’ Authority—with their copyrights and business negotiations. Flynn immediately smelled a rat and wrote DeWitt Wallace that the plan had been dreamed up by “Communists and fellow-travelers” and was “cunningly timed during the summer and fall months when most of the undisciplined writers” were on vacation. Since the Authority would have control over copyrights and contracts, its board of governors (which Flynn compared to the politburo of the Soviet Union) could effectively suppress any book or magazine article that it wanted to.⁶

Flynn was not the only author to rebel against the proposed Authority. A whole series of anticommunist writers—including such well-known names as John Dos Passos, Zora Neale Hurston, Eugene Lyons, Louis Bromfield, Dale Carnegie, John Chamberlain, H. V. Kaltenborn, Clarence Buddington Kelland, Rose Wilder Lane, Clare Booth Luce, Ayn Rand, George Sokolsky, and Dorothy Thompson, as well as many others—formed a group calling itself the America Writers Association (AWA) to resist the formation of the American Authors’ Authority. They soon had the backing of radio and film producers, the Newspaper Publishers Association, and the Newspaper Editors Association, all of whom blanched at the idea of writers being “unionized.” Flynn was appointed to a three-man “strategy committee” (the other two members were Eugene Lyons and copyright lawyer Louis Waldman). John Dos Passos claimed that the AWA was absolutely necessary, since the “western world is threatened as it has not been since the time of the great Mohammedan invasions.” The “first allegiance” of American writers, he insisted, was “to our own coun-

try and its traditions.” The American Authors’ Authority never materialized; nevertheless, the AWA remained in existence as a rallying point for anticommunists in the literary world.⁷

The immediate postwar years did nothing to change Flynn’s view that the Republican Party was not up to the task of resisting those who had come to dominate American cultural and intellectual life. Not long after the 1944 election, he learned that the Dewey campaign had possessed, but not used, information suggesting that the United States had broken the Japanese naval code long before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Suddenly a whole new dimension was added to Flynn’s thesis on the origins of the attack—Roosevelt must have known in advance that it was imminent but had deliberately withheld that information from his commanders in the hope that the attack would spur an outraged public to demand war. He summarized his conclusions in a document entitled “The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor,” which, like “The Truth about Pearl Harbor,” ran in its entirety in the *Chicago Tribune*. It was also printed as a fifteen-page pamphlet and distributed by Merwin K. Hart’s National Economic Council.⁸

The failure of the Dewey campaign to use Pearl Harbor as a campaign issue was for Flynn just another bit of evidence that the Republicans were too timid to mount a successful offensive against the New Deal. Still more evidence followed when Flynn’s accusations led to a new congressional investigation of the attack. Democrats made up the majority of the committee, and their strategy was to “dump” all the testimony that had been collected so far—eighty-four volumes in all—on the Republicans, believing there was no way the minority members could sift through everything in time for it to do any good. Flynn therefore volunteered his services as chief investigator. Merwin Hart, who called Pearl Harbor “the greatest scandal in the nation’s history,” contributed \$25,000, which allowed Flynn to hire a small staff to sift through the evidence, and by the end of 1945 he had thrown himself completely into the project.⁹

Flynn realized that, given the minority status of the Republicans on the committee, the final report would be a “whitewash” of Roosevelt. However, what he did not expect was that two of the six Republicans on the committee—Bertrand Gearhart of California and Frank Keefe of Wisconsin—would break ranks and join the Democrats in signing what Flynn called a “complete vindication” of the administration. The writer felt betrayed, and while he directed much of his anger at Gearhart and Keefe, he concluded that they were merely symptoms of the decline of the Republican Party in general. The Democrats, he claimed, never had any

problem finding “a compliant skunk to do their dirty work among the Republicans.” Flynn had to admit that Pearl Harbor, as a political issue, was dead; it was now up to the historians to ensure that the truth would one day be revealed.¹⁰

Nor did the 1948 presidential election campaign do anything to improve Flynn’s opinion of the GOP. Like most observers, he predicted that the Republican candidate—whatever he might be—would have little trouble in defeating Harry Truman. However, he took no satisfaction in this, particularly when it became clear that the party’s nominee would once again be Thomas E. Dewey. “The more I see of Dewey,” he wrote to Senator Robert Taft (Rep.-Ohio), “the more I am filled with disgust at his behavior.” In his eagerness to win New York’s electoral votes, he pandered to the Jewish community and refused even to meet with conservative leaders in the Midwest. When Truman pulled out a surprise victory on Election Day, Flynn consoled his Republican acquaintances by claiming (as he had in 1944) that an economic collapse was imminent, and that it was better that the Democrats should remain in power to take the blame. However, as he confided to a friend, the GOP had only itself to blame for the defeat; the party had “abandoned its traditional role of making the system work” and was now in the business “of assisting the Democratic Party in killing our American system.”¹¹

The only way to fight the anti-American conspiracy, Flynn believed, was to subject it to public scrutiny, but this was impossible as long as it continued to dominate all mainstream outlets of opinion. The only course of action, therefore, was to create alternative institutions. For example, he hoped to establish a right-wing equivalent to the *New Republic* and to take over *Harper’s* and “drive the radicals out.” But since this would require massive sums of money, Flynn proposed an organization in which “leaders of industry and thought” would “unite their resources and organize themselves in a militant, fighting organization.” It would be independent of political parties, designed to place pressure on Republicans and Democrats alike.¹²

Flynn and his new friends on the right had begun to form just such an association even before the war against Japan had ended. In July 1945, Flynn met at the Palmer House in Chicago with a group that included Robert E. Wood, Merwin K. Hart, William H. Regnery, former congressman Samuel Pettengill, and columnist Upton Close. There they formed a new organization called American Action, committed “to defend our political and economic system against Communist and Fascist propagan-

dists.” Funded with an initial round of donations amounting to \$300,000, it aimed at bringing together everyone with an ax to grind against the New Deal.¹³

Uniting the diverse factions opposed to “Communist and Fascist propagandists” meant winning over a group that had not up to this point attracted Flynn’s interest: Southern Democrats. The writer had become convinced not only that it was necessary to draw southerners into an anti-New Deal coalition but that their basic cause was just. The policies of the Roosevelt administration, in addition to drawing authority away from the legislative branch, had interfered with the traditional powers held by the states. And though he had never shown any hostility toward African Americans in the past—indeed, it will be recalled that in 1942 he had recommended that the Republican Party make a special effort to reach out to black voters—he came to take a dim view of the civil rights movement once individuals such as President Truman, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Frank T. Graham (of Friends of Democracy) embraced it. While he admitted that many of those who joined this movement were sincere in their goal of “advancing human tolerance,” civil rights had become a tool of those who sought “to create and expand social disorder.” In 1949 he wrote to Senator Walter F. George (Dem.-Georgia), a dedicated opponent of civil rights, informing him that he had “a list of 87 organizations brought into existence mostly by the Communists, started with initial appropriations by them and managed by them . . . for dealing with the Negro problem alone.” The real goal was to “indoctrinate” blacks “with the Socialist philosophy.” Flynn was not blind to the plight of African Americans in the South; in a speech to black schoolteachers in Oklahoma, he lamented that they were being denied certain rights guaranteed to all Americans. However, he reminded them that compared to those living under socialism and communism they were still “amongst the freest people in the world.”¹⁴

But while Flynn remained involved in efforts to build an anti-New Deal coalition, he vowed never again to take responsibility for the actual administration of any such organization. That, he believed, had been his mistake with America First, and it had caused him nothing but headaches while taking time away from his true love, which was writing. Besides, he believed he could ultimately contribute best to the cause through his words rather than his organizational talents. During this period he maintained his position as “roving editor” for the *Reader’s Digest*, but he also had several of his articles appear in other right-wing organs, such as the

American Mercury, *Plain Talk*, and *analysis*, and he occasionally contributed editorials to the Hearst newspapers. But he spent a great deal of his time involved in a war of words with Avedis Derounian and the Friends of Democracy. Derounian in 1946 published *The Plotters*, a follow-up to *Under Cover*, in which he reported on continued right-wing activity in the United States and also responded to criticisms made of his first book. And if Flynn was treated lightly in *Under Cover*, this was certainly not the case in Derounian's latest book, in which the author insisted that Flynn's "drivel" was "the most venal and thoroughly distorted" of all the criticism that had been aimed at him. He called Flynn a "super-smear artist" and noted that his writings—particularly on Pearl Harbor—were being distributed by a variety of extremist organizations.¹⁵

The appearance of *The Plotters* rekindled Flynn's rage toward the "Smear Bund," and he retaliated by writing a pamphlet (which, like his others, first appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* and was later printed and distributed by Merwin Hart's National Economic Council) entitled *The Smear Terror*. In it he called Derounian's work "a long, dull catalogue of repetitious drivel," aimed not at exposing fascism but rather discrediting "the political opponents of the Roosevelt war policy." However, he directed most of his abuse against the author's patrons, the Friends of Democracy (FoD), whom he referred to as a "strange collection of snoopers and sneerers" with ties to communist front groups and the Anti-Defamation League. The FoD and groups like it were "private gestapos" that used guilt-by-association tactics to blacken the reputations of patriotic Americans.¹⁶

Flynn's war of words with the Friends of Democracy continued through the rest of the decade and eventually took on the form of a private vendetta. Moreover, it was one that abounded with ironies. In the course of reacting against the FoD's use of guilt by association, the writer increasingly adopted the very same tactics, drawing tenuous links between that organization and a variety of radical and subversive groups. In addition, although Flynn responded bitterly to accusations that he was working with right-wing extremists, he was increasingly becoming a hero in the eyes of those same elements. In spite of his efforts to distance himself from such organizations, large numbers of his pamphlets wound up in the hands of Gerald Winrod's Christian Defenders, Gerald L. K. Smith's America First Party,¹⁷ and the Ku Klux Klan, all of which duly circulated copies to their members and sympathizers. Excerpts appeared in rabidly anti-Semitic newspapers such as *The Cross and the Flag* and *The*

X-Ray without his permission. In short, although Flynn's anger toward the smear campaign was justified, his efforts to rebut the accusations against him ultimately played into the hands of the smearers.¹⁸

Flynn's boldest initiative in the postwar period was the launching of his own radio program, a weekly fifteen-minute commentary on the news entitled "Behind the Headlines." Flynn was no stranger to radio; he had made broadcasts on a semi-regular basis since the 1930s, and in the final weeks of America First he was distributing transcriptions—recordings on vinyl records—to nearly one hundred small, independent stations throughout the country. During the war he attempted to interest networks in giving him a radio slot, but this went nowhere until after the war, when Clark Getts committed himself to the effort. The market for Flynn's lectures was dropping off—Getts blamed this on an ideologically driven vendetta against all right-wing speakers—and the agent sought to use radio as a substitute. Instead of canvassing the networks for airtime, however, he decided to find Flynn a corporate sponsor, so that time could be purchased from the networks. For his own part, Flynn was willing to forgo any compensation for his efforts, for fear that he would be accused of "trying to cash in on my political activities."¹⁹

However, Getts's effort to find commercial sponsorship quickly ran into trouble. Flynn by this time had many friends in the business world who had proved willing to make donations to support his projects. Open sponsorship of a radio program, however, was something altogether different. The chief executives of firms such as the Sheaffer Pen Company, Pullman-Standard, Allis-Chalmers, and the Schlitz Brewing Company all responded enthusiastically to Getts's initial proposals, but in each case the boards of directors of these corporations said no. According to Getts, executives told him that they would love to sponsor the show and had immense personal respect for Flynn but feared that their sponsorship "might stimulate their New Deal friends to make some labor trouble for them." By early 1948, Flynn was beginning to give up on the project, but Getts persisted. As his secretary put it in a letter to the writer, "when Mr. Getts starts something he always finishes it."²⁰

The agent changed tactics and, along with Flynn, set up a nonprofit corporation that would provide sponsorship for the show. This meant that Flynn's friends in the business community could quietly support the program without their corporations becoming official sponsors. The first big break came in the summer of 1948, when the NBC affiliate in Buffalo agreed to carry the show. WGN in Chicago followed—thanks in large

part to Colonel McCormick's fondness for Flynn's work—and before the year was out “Behind the Headlines” was a reality. By the end of 1949 the program was being carried on fifty-six stations, including all forty-five affiliates of the Mutual Network. Thanks to what Flynn called “sheer bulldog persistence on the part of Clark Getts,” the writer was being heard every week “from the Alleghenies to the Pacific Coast.”²¹

“Behind the Headlines” brought Flynn's words to a much larger audience than ever before. Henry Regnery approached him with the idea of publishing a collection of his radio scripts in an inexpensive paperback edition. “He has a very clear way of writing,” Regnery wrote, “and he doesn't ‘talk down’ to his audience in any way.” Getts in particular predicted a bright future for Flynn in radio, promising that eventually he would see to it that he received a salary for his broadcasts. As the agent put it in his promotional material for the program, “I regard Mr. Flynn as the equivalent to FDR in radio.”²²

Nevertheless, the writer reflected on the effort to air the show as “a bitter and disheartening struggle.” Flynn characterized the behavior of businessmen as “timidity and in many cases pathetic cowardice.” He was fighting to protect the system of free enterprise, but given the opportunity corporate executives preferred to sponsor liberal radio personalities such as Walter Winchell, Drew Pearson, and Marquis Childs. Because they foolishly and shortsightedly placed their profit margins ahead of their principles, Flynn claimed, the “leaders of the free enterprise world” proved more than willing to jump “through hoops held for them by the revolutionists.” If the situation were not so grave, he confided to financier Edward F. Hutton, it would be an “incredible comedy.”²³

As much as Flynn enjoyed the radio, his first love was the written word, and it here that he would make his most lasting accomplishments during the postwar years. After the commercial failure of *As We Go Marching*, *Meet Your Congress*, and *The Epic of Freedom*, he published his first national best-seller in eight years. Not only would it revive his reputation as a prominent author; it would also cement his place within the pantheon of heroes of the Far Right.

In the fall of 1945, Flynn began work on a critical history of the Roosevelt administration that he believed would strip away the halo that surrounded both the president and his principal advisers. Three years later his manuscript, entitled *The Roosevelt Myth*, was complete. There were a number of similarities between it and Flynn's previous book on Roosevelt, 1940's *Country Squire in the White House*. Like that earlier work,

The Roosevelt Myth characterized the late president as a dilettante with no understanding of the economy. However, there were some new flourishes as well. One that no doubt surprised those familiar with Flynn's earlier writings was his rehabilitation of former president Herbert Hoover, whom the author credited with having been the real progenitor of the New Deal's only truly beneficial elements, such as the restoration of the banks and the regulation of security speculation. Moreover, while the book avoided the touchy issue of the causes for U.S. intervention in World War II, it did contain considerable material regarding mismanagement of the war effort by New Deal agencies.²⁴

Yet by far the most inflammatory part of *The Roosevelt Myth* was Flynn's accusation that when it came to wartime diplomacy the president had been shockingly naïve—perhaps to the point of treason. Roosevelt, the writer claimed, had been so eager to maintain the goodwill of Stalin that he caved in to every one of the Soviet dictator's demands. The culmination of this policy had come at the 1945 Yalta Conference, when the president's natural ineptitude was made even worse by his poor health (which had been carefully hidden from the public during the 1944 presidential campaign). The result was a disaster, with Stalin managing to secure Roosevelt's blessing for a massive Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and East Asia. The world had been rid of German and Japanese expansionism, but at the cost of an even more powerful and more dangerous Soviet Union.²⁵

Flynn was convinced that he had a major best-seller on his hands. There was just one problem: no prominent publishing house would touch it. He was forced to approach smaller presses, hat in hand, "like a fresh unknown." All this contributed still further to his belief that the publishing industry was actively working to silence voices critical of the New Deal. "I am at my wits end," he wrote in his diary. "Gradually the engines of opinion are moving out of my reach." He feared that the only way he could manage to have his work published—and thus be able to afford to feed himself and his family—was "either to go over to the other side or . . . begin writing about innocuous and utterly neutral things." This he would not do. "I have stood out against it this long," he concluded. "I will do it to the end—whatever the price."²⁶

Ultimately, Flynn did find a publisher. Devin-Adair was a small firm that had for years specialized in topics of interest to Catholics and Irish Americans, but its owner, Devin Garrity, had become acquainted with the author through the latter's work with the America First Committee. *The*

Roosevelt Myth would be the first in a whole series of anti-New Deal and anticommunist tracts published by Devin-Adair in the coming decades.²⁷

Of course, one of the drawbacks of publishing with a small press like Devin-Adair was its extremely limited budget. To deal with this problem, Flynn employed the services of literary agent—and longtime friend and adviser to Herbert Hoover—Frank E. Mason. Mason assisted the author in making a deal with William Henry Regnery in which Regnery (whose son Henry would go on to found a successful publishing company) provided \$1,150 to assist in the dissemination of the book, which Regnery hoped would find its way into “every public library” in the country. The funds not only allowed Devin-Adair to print *The Roosevelt Myth* in large numbers (nearly fifty thousand copies by late October) but also enabled Flynn to produce and distribute thousands of copies of a brochure advertising it.²⁸

Flynn believed that this sort of promotional campaign was absolutely necessary to overcome the forces that he knew would be arrayed against the book. As he predicted, certain retailers (including the Marshall Field’s department store in Chicago) refused to carry it. The Book-of-the-Month Club, which two years earlier had made Derounian’s *The Plotters* a featured selection, failed to offer or even mention Flynn’s book to its members. Those mainstream press outlets that did not simply ignore *The Roosevelt Myth* ran savage reviews of it. The *Atlantic Monthly* called Flynn “a virtuoso of the sneer and the smear” whose “reasoning is palsied with malice, fanaticism, and embittered isolationism.” The reviewer for the *Louisville Courier-Journal* called the book “one of the most viciously one-sided volumes ever published,” while the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., writing for the *New York Herald Tribune*, dismissed it as “simply hysterical.” One observer friendly to the author wrote that of thirty-seven reviews written of the book in major press organs, no more than three were “in any way discerning, favorable, or serious.”²⁹

However, by this time Flynn had some powerful friends of his own. He knew he could count on a favorable review in the *Chicago Tribune*, and a host of lesser-known conservative organs were effusive in their praise as well. For Flynn and his allies, negative reviews in the mainstream media were merely proof that the book had struck its intended target; as former Republican presidential candidate Alf Landon put it, “the screams of the New Dealers” were the best press the book could receive. And in fact the book sold very well in spite of the forces ranged against it; it first appeared on the *New York Times* Best Seller List in late September and

peaked at number two in mid-November, remaining on the list for twenty-two weeks overall. Flynn was particularly pleased when Doubleday, Doran, which had originally refused the manuscript, made an agreement with Devin-Adair the following year to bring out an inexpensive edition of *The Roosevelt Myth*. “In other words,” the author wrote with satisfaction, “they seem to have lost their timidity.”³⁰

There is no doubt that the sales figures for *The Roosevelt Myth* were artificially inflated somewhat, as a number of wealthy businessmen were known to have bought several thousand copies for distribution to their employees. William H. Regnery purchased one hundred copies and encouraged his friends to do likewise. Nevertheless, such volume purchases are insufficient to explain how well the book actually did; by late 1949 it had gone through no fewer than twelve printings.³¹

If *The Roosevelt Myth* reintroduced Flynn to the public eye, his second Devin-Adair publication, the 1949 book *The Road Ahead*, would cause even more of a sensation. Subtitled “America’s Creeping Revolution,” it would become his most widely read and intensely debated work and would bring the term *creeping socialism* into common usage. The fact that it appeared so soon after his last book suggests that he had completed large sections of it long before. Given the subject matter, it is likely that the origins of the book lay in the 1944 manuscript he had written to go under Martin Dies’s name. It will be recalled from the previous chapter that the goal of that manuscript had been to uncover the forces that had been secretly behind the Friends of Democracy and other elements of the “Smear Bund.” Moreover, for that project he had been granted full access to the files of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and it is reasonable to assume that Flynn would not have allowed his research in such a treasure trove to go unused.

The main thesis of *The Road Ahead* was that the United States was following a course that had been traveled earlier in the century by Great Britain. There, he wrote, a small group of “Fabian Socialists” had managed to infiltrate the political parties, the labor movement, the major media outlets, and even the churches and then used these institutions to pull the country toward socialism. Likewise, he argued, the American Fabians had already managed to take over the Democratic Party under the guise of the New Deal and had established a toehold within the Republican Party as well. They had control of the radio, the movies, and the publishing industry; they dominated the civil rights movement and, thanks to the Federal Council of Churches, had assumed positions of

leadership in the mainline Protestant churches. But while their goal was socialism, the final result would be fascism, which, he claimed (to establish continuity with his thesis in *As We Go Marching*), was nothing more than socialism “plus the inevitable dictator.”³²

It was a bold claim, and one that was immediately pounced upon by liberals. “[S]tale and fraudulent,” “reactionary nonsense,” “unworthy of serious attention,” read the reviews; the *New York Times* called it “the latest and most extreme manifestation of an endemic hysteria presently affecting a considerable segment of our society.” Clergymen were particularly angered over chapter 10, which asserted argued that certain ministers were using the Federal Council of Churches to promote socialist causes. In an official response from the Federal Council, Samuel McCrea Cavert called it a “caricature” based on “appalling ignorance and bias” and, noting that the book made no mention of socialist influence in the Catholic Church, hinted that the author was motivated by religious bigotry. Even Republican John Foster Dulles, while expressing agreement with much of the book, wrote Flynn to complain about the “unbalanced” portrayal of the Federal Council.³³

But by this time Flynn had grown accustomed to criticism from mainstream sources; what he valued was the praise offered by conservative writers such as Walter Trohan and Westbrook Pegler, who called *The Road Ahead* “one of the greatest political pamphlets in our history.” He was also gratified by the sales of the book. In spite of the fact that it had received almost no advance publicity, nearly twenty thousand copies were sold in the first month. Sales figures reached 2 million by the end of the year, and a condensed edition issued by *Reader’s Digest* in the following year sold 4 million.³⁴

But, for Flynn, the opinions of reviewers and numbers of copies sold were far less significant than the impact that the book made. Prominent businessmen ordered *The Road Ahead* in even larger numbers than they had *The Roosevelt Myth*, distributing the books to their boards of directors, managers, and employees. Newspaper publisher Frank Gannett gave a copy to each of his editorial writers. The American Medical Association, which was then engaged in a desperate battle to defeat a Truman administration proposal for compulsory national health insurance, arranged to have a copy sent to each member of Congress. Most important, the Republican National Committee purchased hundreds of thousands of copies for distribution during the 1950 congressional election campaign.³⁵

By the end of the 1940s, then, Flynn had made a dramatic return to national attention, in spite of the conspiracy that the author believed held sway over the mainstream media, and a perceived lack of support from an unprincipled business community and a weak-willed Republican Party. He would make an even more noticeable impact in the next several years, as his revelations of an anti-American conspiracy would dovetail with accusations being made by a rising star in Republican politics—a young senator from Wisconsin named Joseph McCarthy.

God Bless Joe McCarthy

The February 1950 issue of *Reader's Digest*, which carried a twenty-page excerpt from *The Road Ahead*, was on newsstands when Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy gave a controversial speech in Wheeling, West Virginia. He informed his audience, a gathering of Republican women, that he was in possession of a list of 205 known communists working in the State Department. The address quickly came to public attention, propelling McCarthy from almost total obscurity to a central spot in the national limelight. It was the beginning of a period in American history that would thereafter be referred to as the "McCarthy era."

For many Americans, McCarthy was a national nightmare, but for John T. Flynn he was a dream come true. Like the writer, the senator was a brash, tough-talking Irish American who had boxed competitively in college. More important, he had an apparent passion for conspiracy theory that rivaled Flynn's own. His favorite targets were not only actual communists but "socialists" and "egg-sucking phony liberals," the very sorts of people whom Flynn himself despised. Best of all, after years of being disappointed by one public figure after another—Franklin Roosevelt, Fiorello LaGuardia, Martin Dies, Thomas Dewey, and so forth—here at last Flynn found a man who refused either to compromise his principles or to cave in the face of opposition. As he put it in one of his radio broadcasts, "God bless Joe McCarthy."¹

For the next four years Flynn never passed up an opportunity to praise and defend the Wisconsin Republican and his efforts to root out alleged communists and communist sympathizers in the U.S. government. In 1953 he joined twenty-seven other writers in signing a letter protesting the way McCarthy was being treated in the press. When opponents objected that the firing of employees based on their political beliefs was an infringement on their liberties and described McCarthy's tactics as a

witch-hunt, the writer immediately objected, both in print and on his radio program. Nobody was denying the rights of individuals to espouse communist views, he wrote, but no one had the right to a government job. Would it not be acceptable to fire those who had expressed admiration for Nazism? Besides, he informed his radio audience, the liberals who were challenging McCarthy on the basis of First Amendment protections were hypocrites. Had not their beloved Franklin Roosevelt personally intervened to keep Flynn's work from appearing in the *Yale Review*? And where had the defenders of freedom of speech been when Flynn and his fellow anti-interventionists had been forced from the pages of the mainstream press?²

Nor was the relationship between the two men one-sided, for there were a variety of services that McCarthy could and did render Flynn. He used his influence in Wisconsin and in states represented by his congressional allies to encourage radio stations to carry "Behind the Headlines." More important, the senator proved willing to take on targets first identified by Flynn. A prime example came in 1953, when the commentator objected to the nomination of Harvard President James B. Conant to the post of high commissioner for Germany. Conant had offended Flynn for making a speech in which he criticized parochial schools, leading the writer to look into his past. He concluded that Conant held a whole range of opinions that "do not represent the prevailing philosophy of the American people." Flynn then turned this information over to McCarthy, who used it to issue a formal challenge to Conant's nomination on the Senate floor.³

By 1954 the relationship between McCarthy and Flynn had developed to the point that the writer was being invited to accept awards on the senator's behalf. But the culmination of Flynn's efforts to carry the Wisconsin Republican's banner was a pamphlet entitled *McCarthy: His War on American Reds, and the Story of Those Who Oppose Him*. The drive to discredit McCarthy, he asserted, had its origins in secret communist cells—the same ones "which enabled the Soviet government, when World War II ended, to take over all of Eastern Europe and most of the continent of Asia, to penetrate our colleges, our public school system, many of our leading magazines and newspapers and news services." In pursuing communists the senator was merely doing his duty as a patriotic American; the only crime of which he was guilty "consists chiefly in his amazing success."⁴

What was remarkable about all this was that Flynn had never before indicated that communism in America was anything that needed to be

taken particularly seriously. After all, the chief villains in *The Road Ahead* were not communists but “Fabian Socialists,” more closely tied to Great Britain than to the Soviet Union. Moreover, Flynn’s correspondence in the early 1950s suggests that he believed there were very few actual communists in the United States; the real danger were those who “promote Communist objectives” such as denouncing capitalism and religion, promoting the planned economy, and defending Soviet foreign policy. In short, the problem was modern liberalism, not communism. He called Americans for Democratic Action “the greatest menace to our freedom and our social order.” While the old Socialist Party (Flynn remained on good personal terms with Norman Thomas) had been forthright in supporting socialist principles, the ADA tried to deceive Americans by advocating the same ideas under the more benign label of “Economic Planning.” Their goal, he wrote in an article for *American Legion Magazine*, was “to destroy American capitalism piecemeal as socialism creeps over its corpse.”⁵

But this is not to say that Flynn believed communists were incapable of threatening the republic; although few in number, many of them had found their way into positions of authority in the federal government. As early as 1949 the writer was being identified as one of an informal collection of journalists and politicians who insisted that Mao Tse-tung’s victory in the Chinese Civil War had come about as a result of communist subversion of the State Department. In one installment of “Behind the Headlines,” Flynn informed his audience that the Truman administration had sold out Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists in exchange for the four hundred thousand votes of the American Labor Party in New York. Those votes, Flynn explained, were considered vital to winning that state in 1948, “and one of the things that the Communists got in return was China.”⁶

Asian affairs were, therefore, very much on Flynn’s mind even before North Korean forces launched their invasion of South Korea in late June 1950. Having now committed himself to the idea that more should have been done to prevent communist victory in China, the writer could hardly oppose Truman’s decision to send troops to help defend South Korea; “I do not see what else we can do about it,” he announced on his radio program in July. While he recognized that the war would be costly—\$10 billion was his earliest estimate—it would be a small price to pay if it alerted Americans to the threat of world communism. Under no circumstances, he told his audience in August, could the country “permit the eastern

world to witness the spectacle of mighty America” being “kicked out of a little country like Korea.”⁷

Could this really be the same John Flynn who only nine years before had informed Americans that they need not be overly concerned if England were to fall to Nazi Germany? Was he really denouncing the Truman administration for “losing” China and demanding a wholehearted commitment to save faraway Korea from communism? The irony was not lost on Flynn’s old friend Harry Elmer Barnes, who complained that the writer was “now screaming for a third crusade.” The only logical conclusion to such thinking, he wrote, was “that Truman is right but is not savage and warlike enough against Red Sin.” Eventually Flynn seemed to realize the contradiction as well; by the fall he was once again accusing the administration of using foreign wars as a means of propping up the economy through government spending. By the following January he was speaking of the “terrible disaster in Korea,” implying that American forces should never have been sent to Asia in the first place.⁸

As Flynn’s initial support for the Korean War began to sour, the United Nations became a convenient target. He had never been a supporter of the organization; indeed, in 1945 he had testified against it before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Korean conflict only served to reinforce his dim view. In October he told his radio audience that while the UN “was supposed to keep us out of war,” it had actually dragged the country into Korea, and he predicted that other conflicts would follow. In January he wrote to Burton Wheeler (by this time no longer in the Senate) that the only way Truman could avoid being tarred as the worst president in the nation’s history was to withdraw from the organization. This was a theme that he would cling to for the rest of his career. The UN, he insisted, was a “dangerous racket” in which Americans were expected to foot the bill for British and Soviet imperialism. “If we cannot slay this Octopus,” he wrote in 1953, “we can at least drive it from our shores and have no further truck with it.”⁹

America’s deteriorating position in Asia inspired Flynn to write two short books in the early 1950s, *While You Slept: Our Tragedy in Asia and Who Made It* (1951) and *The Lattimore Story* (1953), both of which were published by Devin-Adair. The former claimed that, thanks to the work of communist traitors and liberal dupes, Americans had been misled regarding the true nature of communism, all part of a “master plan” to organize the world “on the Russian model.” Part of the conspiracy was the now-familiar claim of communist subversion in the State Department;

however, just as important was left-wing control of Hollywood, the radio, and the publishing industry. For example, Flynn noted that of twenty-nine books published on China between 1943 and 1949, twenty-two were “pro-Communist.” All of these, needless to say, were reviewed in glowing terms, while the seven that dared to defend Chiang Kai-shek were panned.¹⁰

The Lattimore Story focused more specifically on a single individual who had also figured prominently in *While You Slept*—Owen Lattimore, a faculty member at Johns Hopkins University and one of the nation’s leading experts on Asian affairs. Flynn argued that Lattimore, who had grown up in China and worked for the administration during the war (although, contrary to Flynn’s claims, not in the State Department), played a central role in the drive “to deliver China and Korea into the arms of the Communist world.” Not coincidentally, Lattimore had been one of McCarthy’s primary targets. As Edward Rumely wrote upon reading it, the book “completely vindicates McCarthy.” If it could be distributed widely, he claimed, it would no doubt silence those who complained of “McCarthyism.”¹¹

But here again, it was difficult to reconcile such views with Flynn’s traditional anti-interventionism. He alleged that subversives in the State Department were working toward a communist victory in Asia by encouraging a policy of American noninvolvement in that region—but was this not the sort of policy that Flynn had been advocating since the 1930s? Indeed, during this same period he claimed repeatedly that Stalin’s strategy was to “bleed us to death” by baiting Americans into pouring “our precious resources of steel and iron and other things into war materials . . . much of which we are sending abroad.” If that were the case, would not the best strategy for subversives in the State Department be to advocate an even more hawkish response to communist activity?¹²

In any case, both books met with predictable reviews—they were lauded by conservatives (a reviewer for the Hearst papers called *The Lattimore Story* “[a] must for all Americans”) and savaged by liberals (“[M]ore partisan than constructive and more denunciatory than critical,” the *New York Times* said of *While You Slept*). Both books, thanks to outside funding, were made available in cheap reprint editions—for which Flynn agreed to forgo royalties—but neither enjoyed the sort of commercial success that *The Roosevelt Myth* and *The Road Ahead* had. *While You Slept* spent only three weeks on the *New York Times* Best Seller List and never rose higher than fifteenth. *The Lattimore Story* did

somewhat better, coming on the heels of its subject's indictment for perjury (the charges were later dropped), but still never lived up the expectations of the author or publisher.¹³

Nevertheless, these books further cemented Flynn's place in postwar conservatism. Harry Elmer Barnes wrote that the author was so admired among wealthy oilmen that Flynn, McCarthy, and Douglas MacArthur were referred to as the "Texas Trinity." Alfred Kohlberg, recognized head of the "China Lobby," wrote Flynn a warm letter of thanks for writing *The Lattimore Story*, as did Brent Bozell (who was at that time hard at work, along with William F. Buckley, Jr., on a manuscript of McCarthy). The book also won the effusive praise of a candy manufacturer from Massachusetts named Robert H. W. Welch, who wrote Flynn to say that he was "one hundred percent for everything you are doing." Welch would go on to found the ultraconservative John Birch Society in 1958.¹⁴

Flynn's support for McCarthy's efforts did not imply that the author had decided to renew his relationship with the Republican Party. Far from it—he was convinced that the GOP was not giving the senator the support he deserved. Moreover, he was shocked by the willingness of Republicans to engage in bipartisan foreign policy, which to him meant nothing more than caving in to the Truman administration's agenda. Again and again he called on the party to adopt a platform that came out decisively against "internationalism" and the "socialist welfare state," but he professed to be disappointed every time.¹⁵

Flynn in particular had little regard for the Republican candidate for president in 1952. As early as 1950 he expressed concern that General Dwight David Eisenhower was being backed by the same elements in the GOP that had been responsible for the nominations of Wendell Willkie and Thomas Dewey. He was horrified by the maneuverings that took place at the Republican National Convention, where he claimed that Eisenhower operatives had plotted with Democrats to "steal" delegates away from the more traditionally noninterventionist Robert A. Taft. What more could be expected, he told his listeners, of a man who owed his military rank and status entirely to Roosevelt and Truman? Flynn claimed that, in terms of domestic policy, Eisenhower differed very little from the Democratic nominee, Adlai Stevenson. On foreign policy he was even worse, hoping to expand NATO into "WWTO—World-Wide Treaty Organization."¹⁶

After Eisenhower's victory in November, Flynn was briefly willing to give the president-elect the benefit of the doubt. He praised most of his

cabinet appointments as men “dedicated to preserving the American Republic” (he saw Labor Secretary Martin P. Durkin, a Democrat, as an exception) and expressed hope that the way was now open for investigations into administration corruption, Pearl Harbor, and “treasonable activities” that had taken place under Roosevelt and Truman. But this “honeymoon” went no further than Eisenhower’s inaugural address, in which he seemed to be unaware “that he was being sworn in as President of the United States and not head of the United Nations.” While “Ike” talked a good game about the need to resist communism, he and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, were “completely committed . . . to Great Britain and Great Britain’s policy.” By 1954, Flynn had concluded that the only difference between the president’s domestic policy and the New Deal was that the latter had been inspired by Fabian socialism, while Eisenhower’s was based on Otto von Bismarck’s German welfare state of the late nineteenth century.¹⁷

Disgusted by the Republicans, Flynn in the early 1950s began to toy with the idea of a third party—an American Party—made up of conservative Republicans and Southern Democrats who were fed up with their respective parties. But he continued to insist that the real battle had to be waged not on the political front but rather in the cultural and intellectual arenas. He placed great hope in the founding of a new monthly journal called *The Freeman*, which began publishing in late 1950 and regularly carried articles by Flynn. The writer also contributed frequently to the *American Mercury*, which had been recently acquired by oilman and munitions manufacturer Russell Maguire. However, neither of these lived up to Flynn’s dreams of creating an alternative to the *New Republic*. *The Freeman* fell deeper and deeper into debt, while by the end of the decade the once-proud *American Mercury* had become an organ for anti-Semitic cranks.¹⁸

There was one organization, however, that seemed to hold out even more promise, and with which Flynn would remain affiliated for the rest of his career. The Committee for Constitutional Government (CCG) was a conservative, anti-New Deal operation that had been founded (originally under a slightly different name) in 1937 by newspaper publisher Frank Gannett. Its president was Edward A. Rumely, a physician, educator, inventor, and one-time German propagandist with a long history of involvement in right-wing causes; indeed, he had once been mentioned in a highly unflattering light in Flynn’s *New Republic* column. Like Flynn,

Rumely believed that the key to preserving the republic was to educate ordinary people about free enterprise and the Constitution, and to that end the CCG distributed millions of books and pamphlets.¹⁹

Rumely knew Flynn from the latter's days in America First but was highly impressed with *The Road Ahead*, which he believed had the potential to "do in six or eight months what Harriet Beecher Stowe's 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' did in the long years before the Civil War." However, he realized that the \$2.50 cover price of the book placed it out of the reach of many ordinary people, so he made a deal with Devin-Adair to purchase several hundred thousand copies in installments, then sell them at the cut-rate price of \$1.00.²⁰

Rumely ran into serious trouble when *Reader's Digest* issued its own condensed edition, which severely undercut the expected demand, leaving him stuck with thousands of copies. However, that was only the beginning of his problems. A part of the CCG's "educational campaign" involved circulating *The Road Ahead* in rural districts of North Carolina and Florida, where Senators Frank T. Graham and Claude Pepper were facing conservative challengers in the Democratic primaries. When both men lost their bids for their party's nomination, liberals in Congress grew angry about the role that Flynn's book had played and identified Rumely as the source of the troublesome volume. He was called to testify before a House committee, and when he refused to give the names of those who had purchased copies from him in bulk, he was charged and convicted of contempt of Congress. Flynn rallied to his defense, drafting a mass mailing in which he warned that if the decision were allowed to stand, "it will mean the end of the citizen's right to use the printing press save under the inquisitorial supervision of the federal government."²¹

Flynn was deeply impressed with Rumely's behavior during this episode, and it helped pave the way for closer cooperation in the matter of "Behind the Headlines." Thanks to Clark Getts, the radio program had made impressive strides in 1949, but by the end of that year its growth had leveled off. In addition, some of the stations that had agreed to broadcast it began to complain that Flynn's commentary was too controversial, his criticisms of the administration too harsh. Worst of all, financial support for the program had fallen off, so that by early 1950, Flynn had sunk thousands of dollars of his own money into keeping it on the air. Getts's ultimate goal was to find commercial sponsorship, but in the meantime more donations were necessary just to keep the program

afloat. “We are hamstrung . . . for lack of capital,” he informed Flynn in May, begging him to approach some of his wealthy friends for assistance.²²

Flynn decided to turn to Rumely. In 1946 the Committee for Constitutional Government had established a “radio arm” called America’s Future, Inc., which until 1948 had sponsored a weekly radio program by former Indiana congressman Samuel Pettengill on the ABC Network. A meeting was set up in July between Getts and Robert L. Lund, a former pharmaceutical executive who served as president of America’s Future. Getts, who referred to Flynn as “God’s gift to our side,” asked for a donation of \$15,000, which would be sufficient to keep “Behind the Headlines” on the air for another year. With the proper support, the agent claimed that he could double the number of stations handling the program, and at that point it would be sufficiently established that major corporations would get over their squeamishness about sponsoring it.²³

Rumely, however, had something grander in mind and had instructed Lund in advance of the meeting to try to acquire the entire show. Getts had done an admirable job in launching the program, Rumely allowed, but he lacked the “field organization and long-established contacts” that the CCG possessed. In the wake of the success of *The Road Ahead*, Flynn could be “moved toward such dominance at the bar of national public opinion as men like Theodore Roosevelt have had in the past.” If handled by America’s Future, the number of stations carrying the show would easily increase to between two hundred and three hundred.²⁴

There was just one problem: Getts had a proprietary interest in the program and was not prepared to give it up easily. To turn it over to America’s Future, he assured Flynn, would be “the kiss of death for ‘Behind the Headlines.’” As “the leading political philosopher of our day,” Flynn was able to remain “above-the-battle in every political and propaganda sense.” As a recognized “propaganda organization,” America’s Future’s sponsorship would scare off potential broadcasters. In any case, he concluded, Rumely had no real interest in the program; what he really wanted was to use Flynn’s name for his own fundraising purposes.²⁵

Negotiations continued through the summer and early autumn, but there was little doubt that Flynn would ultimately abandon Getts in favor of Rumely. In late October the writer broke the news to his agent; while he recognized the “very fine job” Getts had done in creating the program, there was no denying that it was losing over a thousand dollars a month.

There was no way it could continue without more formal sponsorship. He concluded the letter by asking for repayment of several thousand dollars in lecture fees that Gets owed him; a month later he informed the agent that he no longer had the time or the inclination to continue making public lectures. The association between the two men was over.²⁶

It was not long before the sponsorship by America's Future began paying dividends. In the summer of 1951, Lund concluded a deal with the Dallas-based Liberty Broadcasting System, which had nearly two hundred stations in relatively small markets across the country. Liberty did not last long—it dissolved early in 1952—but most of the stations in that network continued to carry the program. By the autumn of 1952, Flynn was being heard on 362 stations. Radio was carrying his words to a far greater audience than he had ever before enjoyed. “A magazine writer gets a shot at the reader’s mind once a month or once a week or, more likely, once every few months,” he informed Robert Lund. With radio, he could “reach these minds every day and by the millions.” He gleefully reported that it took “a corps of clerks” just to go through his fan mail, one hundred to five hundred pieces of which arrived each day.²⁷

Flynn used “Behind the Headlines” to advance a whole range of causes, including, of course, Joe McCarthy’s anticommunist crusade (his pamphlet *McCarthy* was actually a collection of his radio scripts). But during the early 1950s there was no issue that he pursued more doggedly than the allegation that students in public schools and universities were being indoctrinated with socialist ideas. Indeed, he admitted that he bore some share of responsibility for this state of affairs; he informed his listeners that during his time on the New York City Board of Higher Education he had been too “naïve” to accept accusations that there were communists among the faculty. However, he claimed, the work of the 1941 Rapp-Coudert Committee (see Chapter 5) had opened his eyes. The state legislature had discovered “over thirty . . . card-carrying members of the Communist party” on the faculty of the City College of New York, and there were perhaps three times that many “fellow-travelers” teaching there as well. “It is not a question of free speech,” he told his audience. “This is war.”²⁸

Flynn’s early broadcasts on this subject attracted the attention of Lucille Cardin Crain, a Canadian-born former schoolteacher who edited a journal called the *Educational Reviewer*. This publication was committed to exposing “concealed theories of collectivism” in certain textbooks that were commonly used in public high schools and colleges. Flynn first

encountered the *Educational Reviewer* in early 1950, when the journal targeted a civics textbook by Frank A. Magruder entitled *American Government*. The book had gone through a number of editions over the past thirty-eight years and was used in over seventeen hundred school districts nationwide; nevertheless, the reviewer insisted that the book advocated “collectivism” and encouraged parents to demand that its use be discontinued.²⁹

The circulation of the *Educational Reviewer* was tiny, and the episode likely would have been forgotten had Flynn not repeated the accusation in two of his broadcasts. Afterward he informed Crain that he had never received such an enthusiastic response from any of his programs. Under pressure from angry parents, local school boards across the nation began dropping Magruder’s text from the curriculum, and the Texas, Indiana, and Georgia Boards of Education banned the book’s use altogether. Flynn was deeply impressed by these results and asked Crain to continue to supply him with her reports, so that he might periodically make use of them in his broadcasts. In return, he agreed to let her use his name in her fundraising efforts.³⁰

Thereafter Flynn gave Crain his unwavering support. Not only did he frequently mention her work in his broadcasts, but he also publicly defended her from criticism from teachers’ unions; she was, he claimed, under siege from “pink educators” merely for offering a “service to educators and parents.” He offered her advice on how to raise money and “stimulate groups in each educational district” to wage effective campaigns against books exposed in the pages of the *Educational Reviewer*. On several occasions he approached potential donors on her behalf, which, given the precarious finances of the journal, was perhaps most appreciated of all. Finally, he convinced America’s Future to publish a pamphlet entitled *They War on Our Schools*, consisting of his radio addresses in defense of Crain’s investigations.³¹

Flynn tackled the issue of education with particular enthusiasm, perhaps because of a sense of guilt over having belittled the threat of communism at City College in the 1930s. Looking back on those years, he saw a conspiracy to corrupt young minds, a conspiracy that stemmed originally from John Dewey’s theories of progressive education. Dewey was “a man I never admired” and “a member of half a dozen Red fronts.” Since then a cabal of “influential teachers” had joined with “socialist propagandists” to spread the collectivist philosophy in the public schools. This was, he claimed, the surest method to promote a social revolution.

"You do not have to put poison in every glass of water to drug a city full of people," he told his radio audience. "It is sufficient if you can put a quantity of it in the water supply."³²

Flynn's efforts on Crain's behalf met with limited success, and the *Educational Reviewer* finally folded in 1954 for lack of funds. (Crain herself soon found a job with America's Future.) Here again the writer blamed businessmen for their reluctance to support those who were fighting their battles for them. He felt continually frustrated by his inability to convince them of the gravity of the situation. "I have talked to them in small and large groups a score of times," he complained to Harry Elmer Barnes, "and I have always felt that the next day not one of them could give a résumé of what I was talking about." When it came to the socialist conspiracy, "our business men are as ignorant as the Hottentot."³³

What Flynn found even more maddening was that while worthy causes such as the *Educational Reviewer* had to beg for scraps from ill-informed businessmen, left-wing projects never seemed to lack funding, and in many cases this money came from institutions such as the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations. Both Rockefeller and Carnegie were "profoundly conservative men," he told his listeners in 1952. "Little did they dream that the millions they left for education, for science, for health, would be used to poison the minds of the American people in the interest of the godless communism of Soviet Russia." These foundations provided the grants that were used to write the books "which became the guiding scriptures for our disastrous policy in Asia." They were also the ones who had financed "the whole crusade to take over the schools in the interest of socialism." Thus, when House Republicans announced their intention to investigate the activities of these foundations, Flynn was the first to applaud, and in 1954 he was invited yet again to testify before a congressional committee.³⁴

It would be Flynn's last official visit to the nation's capital. Nevertheless, in that year it appeared that Flynn's career was thriving once again. He had a radio program that was being broadcast nationally. He had an established reputation and a working relationship with most of the country's prominent conservatives. Most important, he was allied to Joe McCarthy, undoubtedly one of the most influential and feared senators in Washington. However, by the end of the decade he would retire, practically forgotten by all but the most extreme groups of the right-wing fringe. How this rapid decline occurred is the subject of the final chapter.

It Sickens My Soul

In the early 1950s it appeared that John T. Flynn was riding high again, with two best-selling books (*The Roosevelt Myth* and *The Road Ahead*) in recent memory and still in print, a nationwide radio program, and a recognized position of authority in a newly revitalized conservative movement. But an astute observer might have noted the extent to which the writer's fame was tied to Joe McCarthy's efforts to root out subversives; or, more accurately, to the same factors that seemed to give credibility to McCarthy's accusations. The period 1949–1952 had been one of the most turbulent in American history, beginning with Mao's victory in China and the almost simultaneous revelation that the Soviet Union had developed an atomic bomb, and culminating in the frustratingly stalemated Korean War. How could the United States, having basked in the glow of triumph over the Axis powers just a few years earlier, have fallen so far, so fast?

As was often the case during periods of crisis, many looked to conspiracy theories to explain the developments of the time, and of course conspiracy theory was Flynn's (and McCarthy's) stock in trade. The existence of a left-wing plot that sought to promote worldwide socialism had been the theme of *The Road Ahead* as well as Flynn's other books, pamphlets, and radio broadcasts in the early 1950s, and it is easy to see how these fit in well with the sorts of claims that McCarthy was making during the same period. But people do not seem to be permanently inclined toward conspiracy theories; the theories may seem plausible during periods of intense crisis, but as the sense of imminent danger begins to fade, they tend to be greeted with increasing skepticism, and their purveyors come to be regarded less as serious analysts and more as crackpots. And this is precisely what happened to Flynn. His ideas helped to make understandable the crises that the country faced in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but as a sense of stability returned in the middle of the decade, and

particularly as the American economy surged to new heights, demand for his sorts of explanations dwindled.

It did not help that by 1954 most people were beginning to tire of McCarthy's antics. There were hints of a homosexual relationship between his chief counsel, Roy Cohn, and his assistant, G. David Schine. Further controversy erupted when it was revealed that McCarthy had pulled strings to ensure that Schine, an army private, would receive weekend passes and be exempted from certain unpleasant duties such as KP. It even turned out that the senator had pressed the Secretary of the Army to promote Schine to second lieutenant. The Army-McCarthy hearings hurt him still more. It was one thing to target the State Department, which in the eyes of many Americans was a haven for pampered, Ivy League-educated elites; it was something else entirely to take on an institution as popular as the military. It was even worse that in the course of those hearings the senator came across as a thug—and a somewhat pathetic one at that—on national television.

This sort of behavior was too much even for many Republicans, and in December the Senate—in which the GOP still had a majority—voted formally to censure McCarthy. A sense of uneasiness with the senator could be found in such staunch defenders as William F. Buckley and Brent Bozell. Their book *McCarthy and His Enemies* appeared a month before the disastrous Army-McCarthy hearings; nevertheless, they drew a sharp distinction between McCarthyism, which they saw as necessary to the defense of the republic, and McCarthy himself, who was “guilty of exaggeration” and whose reckless behavior sometimes got in the way of a worthwhile cause.¹

For Flynn, this sort of attitude smacked of disloyalty. “[I]t sickens my soul,” he wrote to Senator Karl E. Mundt (Rep.-South Dakota), “to see those who should stand behind [McCarthy] at a difficult moment running to cover.” If the senator sometimes came across as a bully this was understandable, given the fact that the communists he cross-examined day after day were well trained in “the art of testifying, lying and evasion before government agencies.” No man having to deal with such traitors, “clad in the protective armor of the Fifth Amendment,” could do this for long without losing his patience. He even defended McCarthy’s interventions on David Schine’s behalf, arguing that Schine was “an expert in the dark and little-understood art of Communist treason.” Would not such a man be more useful to the army as an officer than as a buck private?²

The downfall of McCarthy was just one in a series of blows that befell the American conservative movement during this period. Its recognized leader in the Senate, Robert Taft, had died of cancer in 1953, and no other member of that body seemed poised to succeed him. *The Freeman* and the *American Mercury*, two of the country's most respected conservative publications, faded into obscurity. And in the 1954 elections, Democrats once again won a majority in the Senate.³

While it was predictable that Flynn's reputation would suffer from these reversals, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that he was finished. After all, one of McCarthy's most famous champions, William F. Buckley, Jr., would go on to be widely recognized as the leader of American conservatism. Moreover, on two previous occasions Flynn had bounced back from setbacks that seemed at least as severe—the loss of his *New Republic* column in 1940 and the collapse of the anti-interventionist movement after Pearl Harbor—to become even more renowned than he had been before. And while his basic thesis in *The Road Ahead* may have been complemented by McCarthy's hunt for reds, it was in no way dependent on it. Flynn had suggested all along that the real danger lay not in actual “card-carrying” communists, of whom there were very few, but rather in the large numbers of influential people who, without actually being communists, espoused many of the same ideas.⁴

Yet Flynn's career never recovered from the fall of McCarthy. He published very little before his retirement in 1960. A book, *The Decline of the American Republic, and How to Rebuild It*, was published by Devin-Adair in 1955 but was little more than a rehash of the same points Flynn had been making for the past ten years. In 1957 he came out with a revised edition of *The Roosevelt Myth*, with a new emphasis on the influence that communists had exerted on Roosevelt's policies (for example, this edition claimed that Communist Party chief Earl Browder had been given telephone privileges in the White House). But critics almost completely ignored both books, and sales were abysmal. “Behind the Headlines” continued to air nationally but slowly lost ground, so that by 1960 it was heard mostly in rural markets.⁵

If there were any chance for Flynn to remain relevant, it would have been in the pages of *National Review*. Buckley had been working furiously to launch a conservative publication ever since the McCarthy debacle, and by 1955 plans were underway for its first issue. Flynn was overjoyed; here, at last, was the right-wing alternative to the *New Re-*

public that he had been calling for since World War II. Moreover, Buckley seemed eager to have him as a contributor, suggesting that he write a full-length article tracing FDR's foreign policy after Pearl Harbor.⁶

Flynn's assignment for the first issue of *National Review* was a review of Arthur Larson's book *A Republican Looks at His Party*. However, rather than sticking closely to the book, he used the review to launch an all-out attack on the policies of the Eisenhower administration. Buckley was unimpressed, returning the manuscript along with a letter indicating that the review "isn't what I had in mind." He had been particularly bothered by the author's use of the term *militarism* to describe the president's foreign policy; this was, he wrote, "difficult to defend in the absence of any discussion whatever of the objective threat of the Soviet Union." To show that there were no hard feelings, Buckley enclosed a check for \$100, which is the fee Flynn would have received had the review actually appeared in print.⁷

Flynn's later defenders would make much of this episode, viewing it as a defining moment in which the old anti-interventionists were purged from the ranks of American conservatism. As libertarian Justin Raimondo puts it, "it was clear that there was no room for Flynn and other libertarian conservatives in the 'New Right' of Bill Buckley and *National Review*." Similarly, John F. McManus of the John Birch Society's *New American* claims, "Previously spurned by liberals, then embraced by the Old Right, Flynn would henceforth be rejected by the New Right led by Buckley."⁸

There is no doubt that Flynn found Buckley's letter presumptuous; indeed, he returned the \$100 check along with a sarcastic note thanking the editor for his "little lecture." But there is no evidence that either man imbued this event with the sort of importance that Raimondo and McManus have. Buckley apologized profusely, denying "absolutely any suggestion that I consciously intended to hurt an old friend and mentor, in whose writings I never cease to delight, and from whose courage I draw strength." There was never a hint in any of Buckley's correspondence that further submissions from Flynn would not be welcome, and when in the following month the first issue of *National Review* appeared, Flynn's secretary Rosalie Gordon wrote Buckley to tell him how "delighted" they both were with it. It was, she wrote, "like a breath of fresh air, in the midst of all the murky smog of all the 'liberal' journals we have to read." In any case, Flynn's anti-interventionist views had certainly been no secret; if

Buckley's intent were to purge him from his new vision of conservatism, why would he have solicited an article from him in the first place?⁹

Whatever one makes of this incident, it was undoubtedly the case that by the late 1950s, Flynn was increasingly outside the mainstream of American conservatism. Much of this may be explained by the extreme positions he took on a variety of issues—positions that most conservatives likely supported in theory, but which seemed so remote from present realities that they were difficult to endorse in practice. For example, while nearly all conservatives in the 1950s criticized the United Nations, few were willing to go as far as Flynn in calling for complete withdrawal from the organization, and from NATO as well. Many conservatives faulted the Eisenhower administration for not waging the Cold War aggressively enough, but only Flynn claimed that U.S. foreign policy was being orchestrated by “our so-called ally, Great Britain.” Mainstream conservatives were quick to call for tax cuts, but Flynn (who, it will be remembered, supported dramatic tax increases as recently as World War II) wanted nothing less than an abolition of the income tax. And while plenty of conservatives denounced the Supreme Court for its decisions on racial integration and other matters, Flynn was in a small minority, indeed, when he advocated a constitutional amendment nullifying every Supreme Court decision made since FDR’s attempt to pack the court in 1937.¹⁰

Such views earned Flynn the continuing admiration of certain individuals and groups on the right-wing fringe. A prime example was the John Birch Society (JBS), which formed in 1958. It is unclear whether the writer actually belonged to the organization, but they pushed for an agenda that was virtually identical, and the JBS would continue to promote Flynn’s books and pamphlets long after his death. He also continued to attract the unwelcome attention of racist and anti-Semitic organizations, whose members not only flocked to his radio addresses but insisted (without his permission) on transcribing and distributing his words in their newsletters.¹¹

But Flynn’s agenda held much less appeal for the conservatives who published in the pages of *National Review*. It was not so much that the things he advocated were wrong in their minds as that they seemed so unlikely to materialize that they were irrelevant. As Alfred Kohlberg wrote to him in 1955, the writer offered no “positive program to rally ‘round and fight for.” When it came to foreign policy, for example, all conserva-

tives were in agreement that ideally it would be best to avoid foreign entanglements. The fact was, however, that the American government and people had been committed to nonintervention in 1914 and again in 1939, but the country had been sucked into war anyway. Since intervention was bound to occur in any case, it was therefore better to focus on how to ensure that intervention could serve the national interest.¹²

It was unlikely that Flynn would ever accept such logic, since it would require him to put aside the conspiratorial thinking that had driven his work since his earliest days in journalism. American intervention abroad had not simply happened; it was the deliberate work of powerful individuals with access to the mass media. Flynn believed that he had already uncovered serious conspiracies: Pearl Harbor; the Yalta “sell-out”; the betrayal of Chiang Kai-shek and his Chinese Nationalists; control of the media, the schools, and the labor movement by “Reds”; and so forth. Moreover, Joe McCarthy and his investigators had managed to track down some of the actual conspirators. Yet by the late 1950s the conspiracy had not been smashed; in fact, it was McCarthy who had been disgraced, and Flynn who was now unable to place a manuscript with a first-class publisher. One could draw one of two lessons from this: either Flynn and McCarthy had been wrong (or at least they had wildly exaggerated), or the conspiracy was even larger and more powerful than they had imagined. Since Flynn was unwilling to entertain the former possibility, he had to accept the latter.

In practice, however, this meant that there was no point in getting one’s hands dirty in the day-to-day work of politics. The censure of McCarthy had yet again confirmed what Flynn had concluded long ago: that the world of party politics was one of horse trading and compromise, devoid of any real concern for the national interest. In 1957 he wrote to Gerald Nye—who by this time had retired from politics—that he lacked the stomach even to visit Washington, D.C. Incremental reforms such as tax cuts and spending reductions would do nothing to destroy the conspiracy; this could only be accomplished through major structural changes—in many cases brought about by constitutional amendments. As he put it in *The Decline of the American Republic*, the mission was nothing less than a restoration of the Constitution of the United States “to its historic shape and dimensions.”¹³

All this points to the most obvious reason why Flynn’s career would never recover from the fall of McCarthy: his age. By the middle of the

1950s he was in his early seventies, and there is no doubt that his capacity for work had diminished considerably. The commute to Manhattan had become difficult for him soon after the end of the war, so he gave up his East Fortieth Street office—with its easy access to Union Station and the New York Public Library—in favor of one that was closer to his home in Bayside, Long Island. With some very rare exceptions, he stopped giving public talks outside the vicinity of New York City. If he was publishing far less, it is certain that this was in part because he was writing less. He was also bombarded with invitations to serve on steering committees and advisory boards for a host of right-wing organizations, all of which he declined. And although throughout the 1950s he wrote and spoke of the need for a third-party movement of conservative Republicans and Southern Democrats, dedicated to fighting “the corruptive enterprises of the New Deal,” he ultimately chose to remain uninvolved when such an organization (calling itself “For America”) appeared in 1954.¹⁴

Flynn’s advanced age also helps to explain why he avoided moving into the powerful new medium of television. In 1955, Clark Getts wrote him, hoping to resume his role as Flynn’s agent by promising to arrange a series of appearances on talk shows. The commentator begged off, insisting that he was too busy, but privately he told Henry Regnery that he had no desire to be on television. He had made one appearance on *Meet the Press* in the late 1940s, and it had been enough. “I had to lay myself open to gutter tactics for which I was no match,” he complained. The men in the television business, he wrote, had “no conception whatever . . . of the rules of civilized argument or discussion.”¹⁵

Most important, Flynn’s old age also makes it easier to understand why his views seemed so out of step with mainstream conservatism by the late 1950s. He was a man whose formative years had come during the Progressive Era, trying to make sense of the Atomic Age. For the young men and women who subscribed to *National Review*, political battles such as those fought over the National Recovery Administration or lend-lease seemed like ancient history; there was nothing more than academic interest in studying them now. Flynn himself seems to have recognized this when he wrote in 1955 that “some 46 million voters from 21 to 40 years of age have lived in America . . . under no form of government save that administered by . . . the New Deal.” For Flynn, however, this was certainly not the case. He clearly recalled his own involvement in the struggles of the past and insisted that their outcomes had to be reversed.

As he wrote in 1955, “*We must go back in order to go forward. We must return to the great highway of the American Republic.*”¹⁶

This is not to say that Flynn remained apathetic or silent about the great issues of the day. He weighed in regularly on political matters, holding positions on them that were not usually much different from those that might have been found in *National Review*. He railed against the country’s moral decay, as seen in the quiz show scandals and the “scourge of juvenile crime.” He criticized the administration for seeking to involve the United States in Indochina. He decried Eisenhower’s 1957 decision to send troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to force integration upon the public high school there. He assailed the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren for seeking to bring about “a Socialist State in America.” He lamented Castro’s victory in Cuba in 1959. And he denounced the administration for inviting Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev—the “Red Tyrant,” he called him—to visit the United States in 1959.

But there always remained a critical difference between the way Flynn handled these matters and the way they were presented in the pages of *National Review*. On all these issues, Flynn made it clear that they were merely the latest fruits that had come from seeds planted many years earlier. The quiz show scandals were the product of “a moral climate” that had been “eating away at American integrity for the past thirty years,” telling people that they could “get something for nothing.” Indochina was irrelevant to national security, since Truman had already “delivered most of Asia to the Reds.” Forced integration was a continuation of the Roosevelt drive to destroy the sovereignty of the states. The Supreme Court had done nothing right since FDR tried to pack it with reliable leftists in 1937. Castro had seized power in Cuba because the United States had abandoned the Monroe Doctrine in favor of NATO. And the decision to invite Khrushchev had been forced on the administration by the British, who had been secretly directing U.S. foreign policy since the 1930s. This sort of rhetoric might have been attractive to the grassroots fringe movements that were beginning to proliferate by the end of the decade. However, to a rising generation of young, college-educated conservatives, who were more interested in fighting the battles of the present than they were in refighting those of the 1930s and 1940s, it merely sounded quaint. It was thus to Buckley that such men and women would gravitate, and not to Flynn.¹⁷

Flynn's age caught up with him even more by the final years of the decade. As late as 1957 he was still planning new publications. He reported to Harry Elmer Barnes that he was working "furiously" on another book, tentatively titled *The Pearl Harbor Conspiracy*. He also began developing an outline for a novel about the evils of communism. Neither came to fruition, for in 1958 he began to experience serious health problems. He managed to continue broadcasting for another two years, but in November 1960 he gave his last broadcast. Another presidential election had come and gone, and once again the commentator had found neither candidate appealing. Both John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, he lamented, had spent entirely too much of their campaigns talking about "our so-called prestige in the world." Foreign policy, he asserted, was not about getting "any foreign nation to love us." It should have nothing more than the national interest in mind. "If certain nations in the world like what we do, well and good. If they don't—well, that's just too bad."¹⁸

At the age of seventy-nine, John T. Flynn withdrew from public life. Rudolf K. Scott, who for years had served as the announcer for "Behind the Headlines," took over his role as commentator. Flynn's longtime secretary, Rosalie Gordon, had already made a name for herself on the right, having authored two books: a critique of progressive education entitled *What's Happened to Our Schools?* published by America's Future in 1956, and *Nine Men against America*, an attack on the Supreme Court published by Devin-Adair two years later. Upon Flynn's retirement, she accepted a position on the staff of America's Future.¹⁹

There is even less information available about Flynn's last years than there is regarding his childhood. He retired with Alice, his wife of fifty years, to the old "Victorian barn" they had restored nearly thirty years before. He had long been active in community organizations and sang in the local men's glee club, but it is not clear whether he continued to do so in retirement. He developed arteriosclerosis, which gradually robbed him of his ability to function on his own, and he became an invalid. Alice passed away in 1963, and Flynn himself died of pneumonia on April 13, 1964. His funeral was held at the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Bayside, and he was buried at Mount Saint Mary's Cemetery in Queens.²⁰

According to the *New York Times*, the country had lost one of its "best known advocates of the ultraconservative cause." Buckley, writing in the pages of *National Review*, was far kinder in his assessment: the deceased

was “a superb newspaperman, a professionally competent economist . . . [and] a searing book writer.” Flynn, the obituary concluded,

was a distinguished member of that literate band of publicists who, more effectively than any other class of men, endeavor to keep straight the ways of the mighty—and to make the public affairs of the nation a source not only of pain, but of pleasure.²¹

Conclusion

In recent years historians have paid considerable attention to the development of modern conservatism, with a particular emphasis on the 1960s and 1970s.¹ Comparatively little, however, has been done to examine the origins of that movement in the 1940s. It was during this decade, and particularly after World War II, that anti-New Deal sentiment intersected with traditionalism and anticommunism to form a powerful ideological coalition.²

However, while one finds certain consistencies between this conservatism and its earlier 1920s vintage, it was in many ways a wholly new phenomenon, made up to an extraordinary extent by men who in previous years had never considered themselves conservatives. The small-town boosters and patriotic societies that had backed Harding and Coolidge were long gone, replaced by newer recruits. Some were former communists, convinced that liberalism lacked the moral fiber to tackle the challenge of Stalin's Soviet Union. Others were Midwestern populists, distrustful of the Ivy League intellectuals whom the New Deal had brought to Washington in such large numbers. Still others were southerners, alarmed at the growing power of the federal government, and in particular at the Democratic Party's courting of African Americans. Finally, as Otis Graham discovered in 1967, many of the converts were former progressives, troubled by what they viewed as Roosevelt's willingness to subordinate the cause of reform to the demands of interest-group politics.³

One of these, of course, was John T. Flynn, although he stood out among them by refusing ever to accept the "conservative" label. Of all the evils he perceived in Franklin D. Roosevelt, the one that seemed to bother him the most was that the president had succeeded in altering in the public mind the definition of the word *liberal*. Roosevelt, he claimed, had held to only one principle consistently through his career, and that was support for a larger navy. Nevertheless, he complained in his *New Re-*

public column in 1939, a liberal measure was now defined as anything that FDR supported. The New Deal had appeared promising at first but had made a “shocking descent . . . into the most ancient and degrading forms of reaction.” In 1940, Flynn complained to New Deal apostate Jerome Frank that “the standard of liberalism that I have followed all my life” was now “flying over a group of causes which . . . I have abhorred all my life.”⁴

Flynn was hardly the only one to make this claim. As James P. Young has pointed out, quite a few of Roosevelt’s opponents resented his appropriation of the term. The New Deal, Young writes, “marks a significant shift in the vocabulary of American politics.” In the late nineteenth century to be liberal meant to defend a generally unregulated economy and a “night watchman” conception of government. By the first decade of the twentieth century liberals had abandoned an orthodox attachment to laissez-faire in favor of support for a regulatory state capable of addressing some of the evils of industrial society. However, to this day Americans tend to associate liberalism with neither unregulated capitalism nor progressivism but rather with the New Deal agenda, in which the federal government was to take responsibility for the smooth functioning of the economy and the material well-being of its citizenry.⁵

It would, therefore, be possible to accept Flynn’s contention that it was not he who had changed in the 1930s and 1940s but rather the political culture. However, his own definition of liberalism seems to have evolved quite a bit as well. In 1932, while Herbert Hoover was still in the White House, he defined the term as “not so much a collection of beliefs as a character of the mind.” The most important feature of a liberal was “a willingness to examine the ideas of other men and to reexamine his own.” A liberal valued the “right to free development” of the individual and championed democracy because the people “have a right to rule themselves.” However, he was careful to distance his vision of liberalism from that of the nineteenth century, which was concerned with economic individualism—“the right to run one’s own business” without government interference. Such an interpretation, he argued, was out of place in the modern age, since this form of individualism “has been open only to a small fraction of a per cent of the population for many decades.”⁶

The goal of the modern liberal, Flynn had claimed in 1932, was to find a place for the individual within modern industrial society—to shape conditions under which the physical, spiritual, intellectual, political, social, and economic well-being and happiness and freedom of the

individual can be best developed." Above all, this meant understanding that "the doctrine of *laissez-faire* is now the gospel of the reactionary." Liberals had to accept the necessity of large-scale government involvement in the economy as a check on the power of corporations and other powerful entities.⁷

Such was Flynn the liberal of 1932, but sixteen years later he had a different outlook. In 1948 he wrote an article in the conservative *American Mercury* entitled "What Liberalism Means to Me," in which he seemed to associate himself not with the reformist progressivism of his youth but with the very *laissez-faire* doctrine that he had rejected sixteen years earlier. Liberalism, he claimed, once had as its primary purpose the reduction of the power of the state, but in present times, he lamented, the word had been "captured by certain aggressor philosophers, carried off as so much loot and offered for acceptance to a wholly different clientele." He praised capitalism for producing "beyond a doubt the greatest freedom in the world and the greatest abundance." The "planned economy," he concluded, apparently forgetting that he had embraced economic planning in the 1930s, "has produced before our eyes the most appalling consequences."⁸

It is clear that Flynn's views, both on liberalism in general and on specific issues, had changed; but what caused this? Certain of his contemporaries claimed that he had sold out. In a 1953 article in *The Nation*, T. P. Yeatman observed that some of Flynn's writings in the 1930s might well "by his present standards" qualify as socialist propaganda. The author pointed to a 1936 edition of "Other People's Money" in which Flynn discussed how "the acquisitive writer" could make money by promoting the idea of the "Red menace" and hence playing on "the fears of the rich." The former *New Republic* columnist, Yeatman concluded, was hardly a "sincere conservative" but rather nothing more than "a Johnny-come-lately opportunist." Nor was this suspicion limited to Flynn's enemies on the left; Lawrence Dennis, who certainly had no love for the New Deal or socialism, classified him as one of the "slick writers . . . who, true to the traditions of the oldest profession on earth, tell the big boys what they like to hear and refrain from telling them what they don't like to hear."⁹

However, this view ignores the fact that Flynn had always denounced those who put financial gain and political power before principle; indeed, this was precisely what had produced his conflicts with Roosevelt, LaGuardia, and Martin Dies. Moreover, his participation in the anti-communist crusade of the early 1950s represents virtually the only point

at which he had ever truly seemed in step with his times. In the late 1920s, when the stock market was climbing to heights never before seen, he was among the very few to predict that a crash was on its way. In the 1930s he had fought an increasingly lonely battle as a liberal critic of the New Deal at a time when most of the non-Marxist Left was lined up on Roosevelt's side. In 1940 his dogged opposition to involvement in World War II had cost him his access to almost all mainstream press organs. Finally, even after becoming a part of the conservative movement, he refused to compromise his views for the sake of having his work appear in *National Review*. Surely it is difficult to portray such a man as a mere opportunist.

To understand Flynn's intellectual migration, it must first be realized how consistent his basic worldview remained throughout his career. A clue to this outlook may be found in his diary. Philosophy, he claimed to have concluded at a fairly young age, was "empty and futile." Anything important that had been learned since the dawn of civilization was the work not of philosophers but rather of scientists, who sought answers not in "purely intellectual speculations" but by proceeding "from one small atom of knowledge to another." Certainly one finds this attitude prevalent in his views that reform ought to stem from the work of experts trained in the social sciences. Such individuals would be influenced neither by ideology nor by corporate wealth, and would therefore pursue their work with the same sort of objectivity that a microbiologist would in studying an amoeba. This view is also present in his own muckraking style of journalism, which steered clear of any sort of theory in favor of presenting basic facts in readable form. Evils, he believed, were as easy to identify as any scientific phenomenon, and once they were uncovered, an aroused public would surely demand their eradication.¹⁰

This passion for science was widely held among the progressives of the early twentieth century, who tended to associate philosophy with the discredited laissez-faire views of William Graham Sumner and other Social Darwinist thinkers. However, a lack of appreciation for theory posed problems of its own. As Lawrence Dennis pointed out in a letter to Harry Elmer Barnes, "at the academic level Flynn is not much use." Flynn and others like him failed to realize that the "same facts can prove diametrically opposite conclusions," and that therefore "facts by themselves, without a well-developed theory of interpretation, prove little or nothing." Communists and socialists understood this, which helped to explain why the Left held such an advantage in political discourse.¹¹

Flynn's faith in impartial social science had important implications for how he viewed those who disagreed with him. Since he believed that statements about society, politics, and the economy could be made with the same sort of certainty as the claims of the natural sciences, there could be no such thing as an honest difference of opinion. For Flynn, to deny the facts—and what he saw as the obvious interpretation of those facts—was to deny simple reality. Given this attitude, there was little ground for coexistence between him and his opponents, let alone compromise. Flynn's standard reaction to those who refused to accept his views was to classify them either as fools who could not understand the truth or as knaves whose selfish interests led them to deny it.

This division of the world into the ignorant, the evil, and those who agreed with him naturally encouraged Flynn's tendency to find conspiracies around every corner. For him, the country's basic institutions were fine; corruption existed because of the acts of wicked individuals, acting either alone or—and this was more likely the case—in collusion with one another. This line of thinking pervaded his entire career, but it is certain that the conspiracies he detected grew steadily larger as time went on. The shady businessmen and labor racketeers that he targeted in the late 1920s were of little consequence in comparison to the massive plot to undermine the American republic that he claimed to have uncovered in the late 1940s and 1950s.

All these tendencies fed into Flynn's critique of the New Deal. When Roosevelt was first elected, the writer had assumed that his program would represent a revival of earlier reform efforts, in which an educated elite identified social evils while an outraged public would subject those guilty of these evils to just punishment. The reality, however, was far different. While Flynn claimed to respect some of the president's advisers—Rexford Tugwell, Ben Cohen, and Thomas Corcoran, to name a few—he was far more struck by the presence in the administration of men with powerful corporate ties, such as Joseph Kennedy, Jesse Jones, Bernard Baruch, and William Woodin. The influence of such individuals, coupled with the president's willingness to sacrifice reform in favor of political advantage, was in Flynn's mind responsible for the New Deal's failure to pursue what he considered to be serious and necessary reform of Wall Street and the banking system. Even more ominously, it produced the monstrous National Recovery Administration, a scheme by which large corporations could squeeze out smaller competitors and victimize workers and consumers with the blessing of the federal government. Finally,

when recovery proved elusive, the president had turned to militarism and war scares in a desperate effort to jump-start the economy.

Yet time and again, to Flynn's amazement, Roosevelt continued to be applauded by liberals as well as by the "forgotten man" whom the writer believed had been the primary victim of the administration's policies. Unable to understand how this could be the case, the writer fell back on conspiracy theory. The president—or, more likely, sinister forces behind the president—had quietly taken control over large sectors of American culture and society and were using them to manipulate a gullible public. What had begun as a political movement had escalated into a full-scale cultural offensive that, if left unchecked, would ultimately destroy the republic.

But Flynn's opposition to Roosevelt's foreign and domestic policies is insufficient to explain his move to the right. The writer's hostility to the New Deal went back to 1934, but for the remainder of the decade he faulted the administration for being too conservative, and as late as 1940 he continued to lend his name to liberal causes, such as the defense of Bertrand Russell's appointment to the faculty of City College. Significantly, the leaders of the America First Committee sought to recruit Flynn because of his reputation for liberalism, and as seen in Chapters 8 through 10, this often brought him into conflict with some of the organization's more conservative members.

To appreciate Flynn's ideological migration, one must appreciate how *illiberal* American liberalism had become by 1941, at least in terms of its willingness to tolerate dissent. Certain historians have recently begun to show how the Roosevelt administration used the Justice Department, the tax system, and even the media to harass the president's critics; certainly FDR's 1939 letter to the editor of the *Yale Review* is not an example of what most would call a liberal respect for opposing views. Similarly, the termination of "Other People's Money"—which was, by all accounts, still a popular feature—by the editors of the *New Republic* appears today (as it did to certain readers who wrote letters of protest in 1940) as an attempt to promote ideological conformity among its contributors. Finally, the smear campaign against the anti-interventionist movement in 1941 took on the proportions of what Leo Ribuffo has called a "brown scare," a prefiguring of the sort of tactics that would be used against liberals and socialists in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1932, Flynn had claimed that the hallmark of the liberal was "a willingness to examine the ideas of other men and to reexamine his own"; the liberals who dominated

much of American society in the late 1930s and early 1940s frequently failed to live up to that standard.¹²

Given that a journalist's livelihood is wholly dependent on having access to an audience, it would have taken a man of superhuman stoicism to withstand such abuse without bearing a grudge against those who had attempted to silence him—and John Flynn was no stoic. Living up to the stereotype of the “fighting Irishman,” he took such slights personally and came to regard Franklin Roosevelt and his defenders with something bordering on hatred. As someone who had spent a career targeting elites, it was relatively easy for him to turn his attention away from industrialists and Wall Street bankers and toward a favorite bête noire of conservatives both then and since—government bureaucrats. By World War II, liberals had sown the seeds by banishing Flynn from their ranks; by 1950 they had begun to reap a red-baiting whirlwind.

Of course, Flynn’s move to the right meant that he could give free play to his contempt for the New Deal, and moreover that he could do so before a more appreciative audience, but it also dictated that he drop much of the reform agenda that he had championed in the 1930s. Yet, although he occasionally bowed in the direction of his progressive past—as late as 1955 he restated his belief that the Great Depression had been the product of “the unthinking *chevaliers d’industrie*” driven by a “mad enthusiasm for profit”—there is no evidence that his abandonment of reform caused him much discomfort. It might be too much to say that Flynn by the 1940s had lost his faith in the redeeming power of the social sciences, but he had certainly become disillusioned with the social scientists. In the end he believed that American intellectuals had proved too willing to buy into the pseudo-reform of the New Deal and to jump on Roosevelt’s bandwagon for war. At one time he believed that objective scientists, untainted by corporate interests, could correct the evils of modern industrial society. By the 1940s, however, he had become convinced that corporate money was not the only or even the most serious source of corruption. As he wrote in 1954, intellectuals—whom by this time he had taken to calling “Eggheads”—were irresistibly drawn to power. Believing themselves to be “appointees of Destiny,” they promised the common man security as long as “he deliver his soul to the management of a government operated by the Eggheads.”¹³

It is in this light that we must consider Flynn’s reputation in the early 1950s as an ardent anticomunist. Given that he had ridiculed conservatives’ fear of communism in the 1930s and had asserted as late as 1949,

in the pages of *The Road Ahead*, that the real threat came from British Fabian socialism rather than Soviet Marxism-Leninism, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that there was a certain amount of opportunism behind his decision to embrace Joe McCarthy's crusade. However, he probably did not do so in pursuit of financial or political gain—surely he could have achieved this far more easily in the 1930s by supporting the Roosevelt administration—but rather because he could make it fit his larger conspiracy theory. He had long believed that there were sinister forces at work in America, but there is little evidence to suggest that at any time he believed these forces were being directed from Moscow. It is likely, therefore, that he saw McCarthyism as a useful means by which Americans could be alerted to what he saw as the deliberate undermining of the country's liberal institutions. His attempts to characterize the New Deal as fascist—culminating in his 1944 book *As We Go Marching*—had failed to make the intended impact, even among conservatives. It was simply time for him to try something else.

Flynn's enthusiastic embrace of McCarthy would prove to be the writer's last great hurrah, and, as shown in the preceding chapter, would banish him for the remainder of his career to the outermost fringes of American conservatism. His anti-interventionist foreign policy had already been repudiated by most on the right long before his death in 1964, although to this day his views on foreign affairs enjoy substantial support among libertarians and paleoconservatives. His criticism of the New Deal proved harder and would become a staple of 1960s conservatism; among those who claimed to have been influenced by Flynn's writings was David Franke, one of the founding members of Young Americans for Freedom.¹⁴ However, this too would fade, and by 1980 a self-described conservative named Ronald Reagan would list among his heroes none other than Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Ironically, though, the very impulse that drove Flynn to support McCarthy would become the source of his lasting importance. Although he never actually used the term, he was among the first to claim that the country was in the midst of what conservative columnist and presidential candidate Patrick J. Buchanan in 1992 would call a "culture war." The new conservatism that Flynn had helped to create in the 1940s was not content to fight battles in the political arena. Flynn's war against the New Deal, and in particular his struggle against Roosevelt's foreign policy, had convinced him that he was in the midst of an all-out struggle for the preservation of the republic, and that political campaigns represented no

more than a single front in a much larger war. One of his greatest regrets was that the effort he committed to the America First Committee in 1941 had brought him too much into the world of politics, leaving his cherished field of journalism almost completely to his enemies. Once he was able to return to writing, he found most mainstream organs closed to him, and with a mind that was already inclined toward conspiracy theory, it did not take him long to figure out what had gone wrong. Not only had the forces behind the New Deal captured the Democratic Party, but they had also taken control of labor unions, publishing houses, radio stations, magazines, newspapers, and even churches.

For Flynn, therefore, fighting the conspiracy meant far more than waging political campaigns. More important was the task of creating a set of alternative institutions dedicated to defending traditional American ideals. Some of these were established during Flynn's lifetime, so that even by 1950 the American Legion was making available to its members a list of sources (Flynn among them) that could provide reliable "information regarding the Communists."¹⁵ But these would be only the first in a whole series of conservative think tanks, pressure groups, book clubs, and media outlets designed to counteract perceived liberal bias in the universities, major charitable foundations, and the media. Although his name is forgotten by most today, then, the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the *American Spectator*, Rush Limbaugh, and countless other institutions on the right owe a debt of gratitude to a liberal writer named John T. Flynn.

Notes

“OPM” = “Other People’s Money”

“BtH” = “Behind the Headlines”

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Gary Benoit, “Heroes for All Time,” *New American* 16:12 (June 5, 2000): 34–39.

2. John F. McManus, “Principles First,” *New American* 16:3 (January 31, 2000): 28–34.

3. John T. Flynn, “Other People’s Money,” *New Republic* 76 (September 20, 1933): 363; 81 (January 2, 1935): 219–20; 91 (August 4, 1937): 362–63; Flynn, “Who Started This Regimentation?” *Scribner’s* 96 (October 1934): 201–6.

4. *New York Times*, April 14, 22, 1964.

5. Michele Flynn Stenehjem, *An American First: John T. Flynn and the America First Committee* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1976), 28–29; Flynn to Jerome N. Frank, September 18, 1940, Box 20, John T. Flynn Papers, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

6. On Flynn as “ultra-conservative,” see Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America: The Thankless Persuasion* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 171–72; and Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Sources of the ‘Radical Right,’” in Daniel Bell (ed.), *The New American Right* (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), 190. On the “Old Right” interpretation, see Ronald Radosh, *Prophets on the Right: Profiles of Conservative Critics of American Globalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975). More recent arguments along this line include Justin Raimondo, *Reclaiming the American Right* (Burlingame, CA: Center for Libertarian Studies, 1993); and Sheldon Richman, “New Deal Nemesis: The ‘Old Right’ Jeffersonians,” *Independent Review* 1:2 (1996): 201–48.

7. Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (rev. ed., New York: Basic Books, 1998), 172–73; David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

8. For more thorough accounts of the ideology of middle-class progressivism, see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); David W. Noble, *The Progressive Mind, 1890–1917* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970); and John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890–1920* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992). For the reaction of the progressives to the New Deal, see Otis L. Graham, *An Encore for Reform: The Old Progressives and the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

9. Albert Samuel Karr, “The Roosevelt Haters: A Study in Economic Motivation” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1956), 419–22.

10. Harry Elmer Barnes to Robert E. Wood, March 27, 1953, Box 1, Robert E. Wood Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; “Jolly John Flynn,” *Chicago Daily News*, December 20, 1940, 16; Frank E. Mason to Catherine Peare, August 31, 1964, Box 175, Hoover Post-Presidential Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; Confidential Report by Friends of Democracy, Wayne S. Cole Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; Memorandum from D. M. Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, November 23, 1945, Wayne S. Cole Papers.

11. Stenehjem, *American First*, 26; Confidential Report by Friends of Democracy, Wayne S. Cole Papers.

12. Flynn to Max Lowenthal, February 3, 1937, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to H. M. Lydenberg, July 14, 1939, ibid., Box 19; Flynn to Richard L. Simon, April 21, 1950, ibid., Box 20; Richard L. Simon to Flynn, April 25, 1950, ibid.

13. Confidential Report by Friends of Democracy, Wayne S. Cole Papers; *New York Times*, January 13, 1941, 5.

14. William Henry Chamberlain, “Fighting Mad,” *The Freeman*, May 18, 1953, 602–3.

15. The Reminiscences of Charles H. Tuttle, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1964, 25–26.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. In the late 1960s, Richard Clark Frey, working on a dissertation on Flynn, managed to obtain interviews with his son, Thomas, and his longtime secretary, Rosalie Gordon. Much of what follows, therefore, comes from his account (“John T. Flynn and the United States in Crisis, 1928–1950” [Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1969]).

2. “Chapter One” [December, 1941], Box 32, Flynn Papers.

3. Ibid.; Flynn’s decision to include this is clearly meant to be ironic, given the vicious criticisms he would direct toward the nation’s leaders, Republican and Democrat alike, throughout so much of his career.

4. Ibid.

5. This is recounted in Flynn's later article "Why a Liberal Party?" *Forum and Century* 87 (March 1932), 160; as well as in Frey, "John T. Flynn," 6–8.
6. Flynn, "Chapter One"; Frey, "John T. Flynn," 7–8.
7. Rosalie M. Gordon to J. B. Matthews, July 1, 1958, J. B. Matthews Papers, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University; Brian Miller, "The Life of Admiral George Dewey," at <http://www.spanamwar.com/dewey.htm>, accessed June 3, 2003; Flynn, "Chapter One."
8. Flynn, "Chapter One"; "Author's Biographical Data," undated, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Mary Grace Wright to Flynn, January 14, 1952, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Frey, "John T. Flynn," 9.
9. Ibid., 9–10.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 10; Flynn, "The New Haven Strike," undated, but probably December 1941, Box 32, Flynn Papers.
12. "Notes-Memoirs," undated, Box 32, Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, September 9, 1919, 19; September 15, 2, September 16, 2; Frey, "John T. Flynn," 10–11.
13. Ibid., 11; *New York Times*, October 17, 1919, 10; October 18, 1919, 13.
14. George Britt, *Forty Years—Forty Millions: The Career of Frank A. Munsey* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1935), 247.
15. Flynn, "Diary Entries," May 1920, Box 32, Flynn Papers; Frey, "John T. Flynn," 11.
16. Flynn, "Diary Entries."
17. William Chenery would later recount an episode in which Flynn learned that a local college was going to award J. P. Morgan an honorary degree but was going to do so in Morgan's library rather than at the college itself. According to Chenery, this put Flynn in "a great state of excitement," as he was outraged that the college would go out of its way to accommodate a man like Morgan. William L. Chenery, *So It Seemed* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1952), 139–40.
18. Bruce Bliven, *Five Million Words Later: An Autobiography* (New York: John Day, 1970), 153.
19. Flynn would recount this episode later in his column "Other People's Money," *New Republic* 95 (June 15, 1938): 158–59; see also Frey, "John T. Flynn," 12.
20. Bliven, *Five Million Words Later*, 131; the story is also recounted in John T. Flynn, "Dishonest Business," *Forum* 82 (December 1929): 354–55.
21. Frey, "John T. Flynn," 13–14; Britt, *Forty Years—Forty Millions*, 247–48.
22. John T. Flynn, "Are They Getting Your Money?" *Collier's* 75 (June 13, 1925): 5–6, 48–49; John T. Flynn, "The Easiest Money on Earth," *Collier's* 75 (June 20, 1925): 16–17, 36; John T. Flynn, "You Can't Beat the Races," *Collier's* 75 (June 27, 1925): 18–19.
23. Chenery also noted that Flynn possessed at least one unfortunate quality:

that he was often careless with his facts and figures. The accounting department had to serve as a special editing staff just to deal with the numbers he used. Chenery, *So It Seemed*, 192.

24. Frey, "John T. Flynn," 14–15.
25. Frank T. Ball to G. T. Richardson, February 24, 1928, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Abraham L. Furman, January 5 and 11, 1933, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Frey, "John T. Flynn," 15–16.
26. John T. Flynn, "Kale, Columbia!" *Collier's* 81 (June 2, 1928): 8–9, 41; John T. Flynn, "Home, Sweet Home-Brew," *Collier's* 82 (September 1, 1928): 8–9, John T. Flynn, "The Ghost Catchers," *Collier's* 79 (March 5, 1927): 17; Frey, "John T. Flynn," 16–17.
27. John T. Flynn, "The Iron Man Comes Back," *Collier's* 81 (January 21, 1928): 8–9, 45; John T. Flynn, "Gooda-By, John," *Collier's* 81 (April 14, 1928): 8–9, 55–56.
28. Flynn, "Gooda-By, John," 55–56; John T. Flynn, "Iron Man Comes Back," 45.
29. Flynn, "Iron Man Comes Back," 9; John T. Flynn, "You Tell 'Em," *Collier's* 82 (November 10, 1928): 8–9.
30. John T. Flynn, "Who Owns America?" *Harper's* 152 (May 1926): 754–56.
31. Ibid., 759–62.
32. John T. Flynn, "Business and Ethics," *Forum* 80 (October 1928): 534–37.
33. Ibid., 544; John T. Flynn, "Dishonest Business," *Forum* 82 (December 1929): 351–55.
34. Flynn, "Business and Ethics," 538–39.
35. Flynn, "Dishonest Business," 354.
36. Charles R. Geisst, *Wall Street: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 164.
37. This was an arrangement similar to what is today called the mutual fund. Ibid., 184–85.
38. *New York Times*, September 7, 1924, part 7, 5:1.
39. John T. Flynn, "The Ticker's in a Jam," *Collier's* 82 (December 15, 1928): 18.
40. John T. Flynn, "Taming the Great Bull," *Forum* 81 (February 1929): 88–94.
41. John T. Flynn, "How Much Do You Know about Wall Street?" *American Magazine* 108 (August 1929): 46–50.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. Flynn's first series for the *New Republic* was "Investment Trusts Gone Wrong," which appeared in five parts in April 1930. It would later be published

as a book of the same name. On Flynn's speaking engagements, see *New York Times*, January 15, 1932, 39:1; William E. Bohn to Flynn, March 23, 1932, Box 19, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Bohn, April 16, 1932, *ibid.*; Flynn to Clifton R. Read, June 28, 1932, *ibid.*, Box 20.

2. John T. Flynn, "How Can I Tell?" *Dry Goods Economist*, undated but probably early 1930, Box 12, Flynn Papers; "Have You Quit?" *Dry Goods Economist*, undated but probably 1930, Box 12, Flynn Papers.

3. John T. Flynn, "The Birthday of the Slump," *Forum* 84 (November 1930): 299–304.

4. *Ibid.*, 304.

5. John T. Flynn, "The Dwindling Dynasties," *North American Review* 230 (December 1930): 645–51.

6. John T. Flynn, "Krueger," *New Republic* 71 (May 25, 1932): 35–38; John T. Flynn, "The Witch of Wall Street," *Mentor* 18 (February 1930): 38–40; John T. Flynn, "What Happened to Insull," *New Republic* 70 (May 4, 1932): 316–19; John T. Flynn, "Up and Down with Sam Insull," *Collier's* 90 (December 3, 1932): 10–11; (December 10, 1932): 18–21; (December 17, 1932): 12–13; (December 24, 1932): 27–29.

7. John T. Flynn, "Graft in Business," *New Republic* 67 (August 5, 1931): 304–7; (August 12, 1931): 335–38; *New Republic* 68 (August 19, 1931): 14–17; John T. Flynn, *Graft in Business* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1931).

8. Flynn, "Graft in Business," *New Republic* 67, 304; Flynn, *Graft in Business*, 20–21, 28–29, 34–35.

9. John T. Flynn, "God's Gold: Religion and Business," *Forum* 84 (July 1930): 1–8; Flynn, *Graft in Business*, 36–38.

10. Flynn, *Graft in Business*, v–vi, viii, 287–88, 302.

11. John T. Flynn, "Speculation and Gambling," *Harper's* 160 (January 1930): 201–8; Flynn to Frederick L. Allen, October 24, 1930, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn, "Birthday of the Slump," 303–4; Cedric B. Cowing, *Populists, Plungers, and Progressives: A Social History of Stock and Commodity Speculation, 1890–1936* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 159–60.

12. John T. Flynn, "Mobilizing Deflation," *Forum* 83 (February 1930): 65–69; John T. Flynn, "How the Short Selling Game Works," *New Republic* 70 (April 27, 1932): 289–91; John T. Flynn, "Senate Inquisitors and Private Rights," *Harper's* 161 (August 1930): 357–64; Flynn, "Speculation and Gambling," 208.

13. John T. Flynn, "Investment Trusts Gone Wrong," *New Republic* 62 (April 2–23, 1930): 181–94, 240–42, 267–69; John T. Flynn, "Investment Trusts," *American Federationist* 39:5 (May 1932): 509–13.

14. Flynn, "Investment Trusts Gone Wrong," 240–42.

15. Flynn, "Investment Trusts," 509–13.

16. Flynn to Samuel D. Schmalhausen, October 29, 1930, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
17. John T. Flynn, "The Big Bank Round-Up," *Collier's* 85 (January 11, 1930): 20–21; John T. Flynn, "Big Banks Out of Little Ones," *New Republic* 63 (June 25, 1930): 141–43.
18. John T. Flynn, "News by Courtesy," *Forum* 83 (March 1930): 139–43; Larry Tye, *The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays and the Birth of Public Relations* (New York: Crown, 1998), 107.
19. Flynn, "Mobilizing Deflation," 68–69; Flynn, *Graft in Business*, 299–301.
20. Flynn, *Graft in Business*, 291–94; John T. Flynn, "Bankers and Bankruptcy," *Common Sense*, December 5, 1932, Box 12, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, "Why Corporations Leave Home," *Atlantic* 150 (September 1932): 268–76.
21. Flynn, "Graft in Business," *New Republic* 68, 16.
22. Ibid.; John T. Flynn, "Proxy's Army," *Collier's* 86 (November 29, 1930): 14–15; Flynn, *Graft in Business*, 288–89.
23. John T. Flynn, "The Security Wage," *Forum* 86 (October 1931): 247–51.
24. Flynn, "Mobilizing Deflation," 67.
25. Flynn, "Birthday of the Slump," 299; Flynn quoted in "How I Shall Vote," *Forum* 88 (November 1932): 259.
26. Flynn to Frederick L. Allen, February 23, 1932, Box 18, Flynn Papers.
27. John T. Flynn, "Inside the R.F.C.: An Adventure in Secrecy," *Harper's* 166 (January 1933): 161–69; John T. Flynn, "Michigan Magic," *Harper's* 167 (December 1932): 1–11; James Stuart Olson, *Herbert Hoover and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, 1931–1933* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1977), 103.
28. Flynn, "Inside the R.F.C.," 166, 169; John T. Flynn, "Bailing Out the Van Swerigens," *New Republic* 74 (April 19, 1933): 279–80.
29. William E. Bohn to Flynn, March 23, 1932, and Flynn to William E. Bohn, April 16, 1932, Box 19, Flynn Papers; R. Alan Lawson, *The Failure of Independent Liberalism, 1930–1941* (New York: Capricorn, 1971), 43; Flynn to Clifton R. Read, June 28, 1932, Box 20, *ibid.*
30. Flynn, *Graft in Business*, 289–90.
31. John T. Flynn, "Pyramiding of Holding Companies," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 159 (January 1932): 15–22; Flynn to Samuel D. Schmalhausen, October 29, 1930, and November 11, 1930, Box 20, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, "An Ironmaster Tackles Today's Biggest Puzzle," *American Magazine* 116 (August 1933): 59.
32. Flynn to Jason Westerfield, January 7, 1930, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
33. John T. Flynn, "On the Trust-Busting Front," *Collier's* 86 (August 2, 1930): 10–11; John T. Flynn, "Oats for the Iron Horse," *Collier's* 85 (April 26,

- 1930): 10–12; John T. Flynn, “War to the Last Drop,” *Collier’s* 85 (May 24, 1930): 10–11.
34. John T. Flynn, “Chain Stores: Menace or Promise,” *New Republic* 66 (April 15–May 13, 1931): 223–26, 270–73, 324–26, 350–53.
 35. John T. Flynn, *God’s Gold: The Story of Rockefeller and His Times* (Chautauqua, NY: Chautauqua Press, 1932), 487–88.
 36. *Ibid.*, 4–5.
 37. “The Human Interest in Macy’s Books,” radio interview, January 11, 1932, Box 16, Flynn Papers.
 38. *New York Times*, October 16, 1932, part 5, 3.
 39. Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, September 24, 1931, Box 19, File 4, Harry Elmer Barnes Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming; Frederick L. Allen to Flynn, March 9, 1933, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Matthew Josephson to Flynn, September 22, 1933, *ibid.*, H. L. Mencken to Flynn, September 30, 1932, *ibid.*

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Bliven, *Five Million Words Later*, 200.
2. Flynn tended to criticize Hoover for spending not too much but too little; for example, in late 1930 he faulted the president for committing only a little over \$50 million to public works projects. See Flynn, “Birthday of the Slump,” 301.
3. Flynn to H. L. Mencken, November 26, 1932, Box 18, Flynn Papers; “How I Shall Vote,” 259; Flynn to Frank J. Hogan, November 7, 1932, Box 18, Flynn Papers.
4. “January 6, 1940,” Box 32, Flynn Papers.
5. John T. Flynn, “Government by Millionaires,” *Common Sense* 1 (March 2, 1933): 10–11.
6. Radio address, station WRNY, March 21, 1933, Box 16, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “American Revolution: 1933,” *Scribner’s* 94 (August 1933): 1–6.
7. Radio address, March 21, 1933; Flynn, “American Revolution.”
8. *New York Times*, April 14, 1964; Radio Broadcasts, 1934, reel 68, Norman Thomas Papers, New York Public Library, New York, New York; “Lectures,” Box 32, Flynn Papers.
9. Bliven, *Five Million Words Later*, 199–200. One might be tempted to discount Bliven’s words, given the falling out that the two men had in 1940, were it not for the fact that others such as William L. Chenery (see Chapter 1) noted the same tendency in Flynn.
10. Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 54–55; Felix Frankfurter to Bruce Bliven, March 31, 1933, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Felix Frankfurter to Malcolm Cowley, March 31, 1933, *ibid.* Flynn’s words to Frankfurter aside, the choice of “Other People’s

Money" was a bit odd, since when it came to the subject of big business, Flynn's views were precisely the opposite of those of Brandeis.

11. John T. Flynn, "The Wall Street Debt Machine," *Harper's* 167 (July 1933): 129–38; Flynn to Drew Pearson, March 22, 1933, Box 19, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, "How to Make Money in Wall Street," *Red Book*, September 5, 1933, Box 14, *ibid.*

12. Flynn, "Wall Street Debt Machine"; John T. Flynn, "Abolish Stock Gambling!" *Christian Century* 50 (August 9, 1933): 1011–33; John T. Flynn, "The Dangers of Branch Banking," *Forum* 89 (May 1933): 258–62.

13. Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920–1941* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 290.

14. *Ibid.*, 290–92.

15. League for Industrial Democracy luncheon, March 19, 1933, Box 16, Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, March 19, 1933, 4:2.

16. John T. Flynn, "The Bankers and the Crisis," *New Republic* 74 (March 22, 1933): 157–59.

17. Flynn, "Dangers of Branch Banking," 258; John T. Flynn, "OPM," *New Republic* 75 (June 28, 1933): 181–82; (July 19, 1933), 262–63.

18. *New York Times*, December 24, 1933, part 2, 14:1; Flynn, "Dangers of Branch Banking," 259–61.

19. Among them were Thomas Corcoran, then counsel for the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, and Ben Cohen, assistant counsel for the Public Works Association. Both men were protégés of Felix Frankfurter, and both would serve as crucial influences on the New Deal. Donald Ritchie, "The Legislative Impact of the Pecora Investigation," *Capitol Studies* 5 (Fall 1977): 87–101; John T. Flynn, "The Marines Land in Wall Street," *Harper's* 169 (July 1934): 148–55.

20. It would be published in 1934 as *Security Speculation: Its Economic Effects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934).

21. Flynn to Ferdinand Pecora, August 16, 29, 1933, Box 29, Flynn Papers; Frey, "John T. Flynn," 68–69.

22. Frey, "John T. Flynn," 69; Flynn to Russell Lord, September 12, 1933, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn, "OPM," *New Republic* 76 (September 20, 1933): 333–34.

23. Frey, "John T. Flynn," 69–70; Flynn, "OPM," *New Republic* 84 (March 23, 1938): 193; John Brooks, *Once in Golconda: A True Drama of Wall Street, 1920–1938* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 197–98.

24. Frey, "John T. Flynn," 70–71; Flynn quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 435; Geisst, *Wall Street*, 222.

25. Frey, "John T. Flynn," 71–72; Flynn, "Marines Land in Wall Street," 151.

Michael E. Parrish, *Securities Regulation and the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 113–19.

26. Flynn, “Marines Land in Wall Street,” 151; Ralph F. DeBedts, *The New Deal’s SEC: The Formative Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 53.

27. Flynn, “Marines Land in Wall Street,” 152–55.

28. “April 9, 1934,” Box 32, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 74 (May 10, 1933): 364–65; *New Republic* 79 (May 23, 1934): 42–43; (May 31, 1934): 69–70; Cowing, *Populists, Plungers, and Progressives*, 247–48; Brooks, *Once in Golconda*, 204.

29. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 75 (June 13, 1934): 127–28; Flynn, “Marines Land in Wall Street,” 152.

30. Flynn, “Marines Land in Wall Street,” 155; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 79 (May 30, 1934): 70–71.

31. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 79 (July 11, 1934): 236–37. DeBedts, *New Deal’s SEC*, 88; Brooks, *Once in Golconda*, 205. Flynn would later admit to having misjudged Kennedy. When the latter announced his retirement from the SEC in October 1935, Flynn called him “the most useful member of the commission.” Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 84 (October 9, 1935): 244.

32. Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 508–10. See also Bernard Bellush, *The Failure of the NRA* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975); and Donald R. Brand, *Corporatism and the Rule of Law: A Study of the National Recovery Administration* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

33. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 75 (June 28, 1933): 181–82; (July 5, 1933): 208–9; *New Republic* 77 (February 7, 1934): 362–63; John T. Flynn, “Scrap the NRA!” *Forum* 91 (January 1934): 3–7; John T. Flynn, “The New Partnership: An Analysis of the N.R.A.,” *Common Sense* 2 (August 1933): 14–16.

34. Flynn, “The New Partnership,” 14–16; Flynn to Frederick C. Howe, August 3, 1933, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn, “Scrap the NRA!” 7; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 80 (September 12, 1934): 129–30; (October 31, 1934): 336–37; John T. Flynn, “Whose Child Is the NRA?” *Harper’s* 169 (September 1934): 387.

35. Flynn, “Whose Child Is the NRA?” 392; John T. Flynn, “NRA: 1934,” *Common Sense* 3 (May 1934): 11–12. Johnson countered rather lamely that it had not been included because organized labor did not want it; *New York Times*, September 15, 1934, 2:3. Flynn would later refer to the general as “the greatest enemy labor ever had in this country.” Flynn to Thomas Corcoran, October 23, 1935, Thomas Corcoran Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

36. Flynn, “Scrap the NRA!” 5; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 77 (December 20, 1933): 167–68; Flynn, “NRA: 1934,” 11–12.

37. John T. Flynn, “Who Started This Regimentation?” *Scribner’s* 96 (October 1934): 201–6; Flynn, “Whose Child Is the NRA?” 385; Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 77 (December 6, 1933): 100–101; *New Republic* 79 (May 16, 1934): 18; Flynn, “Scrap the NRA!” 3.

38. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 79 (May 23, 1934): 42–43; (May 30, 1934), 70–71; *New Republic* 80 (September 26, 1934): 183–84; (August 29, 1934): 73–74; John T. Flynn, “The Collapse of the New Deal,” *Common Sense* 3 (November 1934): 6–8.

39. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 79 (August 8, 1934): 345–46; (August 22, 1934): 46–47.

40. John T. Flynn, “Starvation Wages,” *Forum* 89 (June 1933): 327–31; John T. Flynn, “What Price Executives?” *New Republic* 74 (April 26, 1933): 309–10; John T. Flynn, “What Should a Man Earn?” *Forum* 90 (July 1933): 3–8; John T. Flynn, “We Can Build Our Way Out,” *Collier’s* 91 (June 10, 1933): 12–13; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 79 (July 4, 1934): 209–10. Flynn’s advocacy of public spending earned him a friendly letter from, among others, the famed British economist John Maynard Keynes; Keynes to Flynn, October 2, 1933, Box 18, Flynn Papers.

41. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 78 (April 18, 1934): 271–72; John T. Flynn, “Who’s Holding Back Public Works?” *New Republic* 76 (September 20, 1933): 145–48; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 79 (May 16, 1934): 18; (June 27, 1934): 181–82; “January 6, 1940,” Flynn Papers, Box 32.

42. Flynn, “Whose Child Is the NRA?”; John T. Flynn, “Roosevelt Faces 1936,” *Scribner’s* 96 (July 1934): 1–6; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 76 (October 4, 1933): 211; *New Republic* 78 (March 21, 1934): 158–60; (March 28, 1934): 184–85; *New Republic* 81 (December 19, 1934): 164–65; *New Republic* 79 (June 20, 1934): 154–55.

43. “The Consumer under the New Deal,” radio address for the League for Industrial Democracy, December 1933, Box 16, Flynn Papers.

44. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 81 (November 21, 1934): 45–46; (November 28, 1934): 70–71; Flynn, “Roosevelt Faces 1936,” 1–6.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. “War,” manuscript for *Country Home* magazine, December 1, 1933, Box 12, Flynn Papers.

2. Like many critics of foreign intervention, Flynn refused to refer to himself as an “isolationist,” which he saw as nothing more than a smear term used by those who favored war. He preferred the terms *noninterventionist* and *anti-interventionist* to describe his views, and these are the terms used here. John T. Flynn, “OPM: Isolation and Foreign Trade,” *New Republic* 99 (June 14, 1939): 159.

3. John T. Flynn, “OPM: Chestnuts, Rubber and Democracy,” *New Republic*

103 (October 21, 1940): 556; debate broadcast, November 18, 1938, Box 16, Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, June 20, 1939, 24:1; John T. Flynn, “OPM: King across the Water,” *New Republic* 99 (June 28, 1939): 215. See also John E. Moser, *Twisting the Lion’s Tail: American Anglophobia between the World Wars* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

4. Stenehjem, *American First*, 27.

5. At a 1938 meeting on the campus of Queens College to protest the persecution of the Jews in Germany, Flynn publicly expressed his hope “for the early deliverance of unhappy Germany from the tyrants who degrade her.” Queens College address, November 22, 1938, Box 16, Flynn Papers.

6. “January 6, 1940,” Box 32, Flynn Papers.

7. Ibid.; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 85 (November 13, 1935): 17; *New Republic* 88 (October 28, 1936): 350.

8. NEA Service, September 1935, Box 13, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 90 (March 24, 1937): 209–10; John T. Flynn, “The War Boom Begins,” *Harper’s* 175 (July 1937): 113–22.

9. Gerald P. Nye to Flynn, May 25, 1934, Box 20, Flynn Papers; John E. Wiltz, *In Search of Peace: The Senate Munitions Inquiry, 1934–1936* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 42–53; Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 118–21; Matthew Ware Coulter, *The Senate Munitions Inquiry of the 1930s: Beyond the Merchants of Death* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 31; Wayne S. Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), 72.

10. Coulter, *Senate Munitions Inquiry*, 35–47, 59–60; Stuart D. Brandes, *Warhogs: A History of War Profits in America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 212–14; Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 121–22; Flynn to Bruce Bliven, December 14, 1934, Box 19, Flynn Papers.

11. Flynn to Bruce Bliven, December 14, 1934, Box 19, Flynn Papers.

12. Ibid.; “January 6, 1940,” Box 32, Flynn Papers.

13. *New York Times*, December 13, 1934, 1:2; Wiltz, *In Search of Peace*, 14–15; Coulter, *Senate Munitions Inquiry*, 60–61.

14. Roosevelt was particularly upset at the defeat of his proposal that the United States join the World Court; most of the Nye Committee’s members were among those who voted against it. Coulter, *Senate Munitions Inquiry*, 62–63.

15. Ibid., 59–65; Wiltz, *In Search of Peace*, 119–20; Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye*, 82–83; Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 123; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 81 (December 26, 1934): 192–93.

16. *New York Times*, March 20, 1934, 1:6.

17. *New York Times*, March 22, 1935, 7:4; Brandes, *Warhogs*, 220; Coulter, *Senate Munitions Inquiry*, 81; Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 126–27.

18. Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 128–29; Coulter, *Senate Munitions Inquiry*, 81; Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye*, 84–86; *New York Times*, March 22, 1935, 7:4;

- March 24, 1935, 28:1; Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 1932–45 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Flynn, Munitions Series, NEA Service, April 1935, Box 13, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “OPM: A Bill to Dull the Appetite for War,” *New Republic* 94 (April 6, 1938): 274.
19. *New York Times*, April 3, 1935, 1:1; Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 129–30; Coulter, *Senate Munitions Inquiry*, 81.
 20. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 82 (April 24, 1935): 311–12; *New York Times*, April 7, 1935, 1:4.
 21. *New York Times*, April 10, 1935, 1:3; April 11, 1935, 20:5; April 16, 1935, 1:7.
 22. *New York Times*, April 10, 1935, 1:3; Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 136.
 23. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 85 (February 5, 1936): 368; Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 136–37; Coulter, *Senate Munitions Inquiry*, 115–19.
 24. This is the assessment of Wiltz, *In Search of Peace*; others who have reached this conclusion include Samuel Lubell, *The Future of American Politics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 141; Robert David Johnson, *The Peace Progressives and American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 291–94; and Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America during World War II* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 35, 48.
 25. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 86 (February 19, 1936): 46–47. Historian Matthew Ware Coulter has argued that Flynn was right; Coulter, *Senate Munitions Inquiry*, 127–46.
 26. Brandes, *Warhogs*, 223–24; Ellis N. Livingston, “Senate Investigating Committees, 1900–1938” (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1953), 153, 167.
 27. Robert A. Divine, *The Illusion of Neutrality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 114–17.
 28. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 83 (August 7, 1935): 362.
 29. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 84 (October 23, 1935): 296–97.
 30. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 84 (November 6, 1935): 361–62; 86 (February 26, 1936): 73–74. Roosevelt had advocated a discriminatory embargo in the summer of 1935, which led Flynn to believe that the president never had any real interest in neutrality.
 31. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 84 (October 23, 1935): 296–97; (November 6, 1935): 361–62.
 32. John T. Flynn, “Roosevelt’s Second Term,” *Southern Review* 2 (Winter 1937): 433–34; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 92 (September 29, 1937): 214; John T. Flynn, “U.S. Neutrality: Muddling through to Sudden Death,” *Common Sense* 6 (October 1937): 8–10.
 33. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 92 (October 6, 1937): 243.
 34. Divine, *Illusion of Neutrality*, 216; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Repub-*

lic 93 (January 5, 1938): 254–55; *New York Times*, January 9, 1938, 1:4; John T. Flynn, “OPM: Making China Safe for Standard Oil,” *New Republic* 94 (March 16, 1938): 163–64; Flynn to William E. Borah, January 7, 1938, Box 20, Flynn Papers.

35. *New York Times*, January 9, 1938, 1:4; John T. Flynn, “OPM: The President’s Foreign Policy,” *New Republic* 96 (September 28, 1938): 213; John T. Flynn, “OPM: Recovery through War Scares,” *New Republic* 96 (November 2, 1938): 360–61; John T. Flynn, “OPM: Armament and the Borrowing Program,” *New Republic* 97 (December 14, 1938), 172.

36. Flynn to George W. Norris, December 30, 1937, Box 20, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “Nothing Less Than a Crime,” *Common Sense* 8 (March 1939): 11–12.

37. The son anglicized the family name by dropping the two c’s from it.

38. Stephen Raushenbush to Flynn, October 27, 1937, Box 19, Flynn Papers; Oswald Garrison Villard to Flynn, July 5, 1939, Box 20, Flynn Papers.

39. Minutes of the “Keep America Out of War” Committee meeting, February 7, 1938, reel 68, Norman Thomas Papers, New York Public Library; “How Can the Keep America Out of War Congress Succeed?” undated pamphlet, Box 29, America First Committee Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California. The most complete discussion of the KAOWC is Justus D. Doenecke, “Non-interventionism of the Left: The Keep America Out of the War Congress, 1938–41,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 12 (1977): 221–36.

40. Alvaine Hollister to Norman Thomas, March 3, 1938, reel 7, Norman Thomas Papers; Flynn to Norman Thomas, March 28, 1938, *ibid.*; Ferdinand Lundberg to Norman Thomas, September 18, 1938, reel 9, *ibid.*; Norman Thomas to Ferdinand Lundberg, September 19, 1938, *ibid.*; memorandum on the Keep America Out of War Committee work, May 1938, reel 68, *ibid.*; Doebecke, “Non-interventionism of the Left,” 223.

41. NEA Service, March 1938, Box 13, Flynn Papers.

42. John T. Flynn, “OPM: Definitions by Carter Glass,” *New Republic* 96 (October 12, 1938): 270; John T. Flynn, “OPM: Peace, It’s Wonderful,” *New Republic* 96 (October 19, 1938): 305.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. “Board of Higher Education,” undated, Box 32, Flynn Papers.

2. “Board of Higher Education,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1935, 21:4.

3. Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America’s First Mass Student Movement, 1929–1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 23–25; *New York Times*, January 26, 1936, part 11, 11:1; see also Ralph S. Brax, *The First Student Movement: Student Activism in the United States during the 1930s* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1981).

4. S. Willis Rudy, *The College of the City of New York: A History, 1847–1947* (New York: City College Press, 1949), 404, 414–17; Cohen, *When the Old Left was Young*, 108–17.
5. Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 426–29; *New York Times*, January 21, 1936, 1:2.
6. “Board of Higher Education,” Flynn Papers; Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 420.
7. “Flynn Joins City Board of Higher Education,” undated newspaper clipping, Box 19, Flynn Papers.
8. “Board of Higher Education,” Flynn Papers.
9. *New York Times*, September 23, 1935, 17:5; “Board of Higher Education,” Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, January 21, 1936, 1:2.
10. Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 418–20; *New York Times*, January 22, 1936, 18:7, 21:6; January 27, 1936, 19:8; February 3, 1936, 15:3; February 4, 1936, 9:8; February 6, 1936, 15:1; February 14, 1936, 3:6; February 19, 1936, 4:2; March 3, 1936, 24:2; March 11, 1936, 8:2; April 21, 1936, 24:3.
11. *New York Times*, January 28, 1936, 14:2; February 20, 1936, 3:6; Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 429.
12. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, May 28, 1936, Lewis Mumford Papers, Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
13. Ibid.
14. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, June 2, 1936, Mumford Papers.
15. Ibid.
16. *New York Times*, June 8, 1936, 21:6. Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 429–30.
17. Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 429–30; Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Higher Education of the City of New York, June 9, 1936, *Proceedings of the Board of Higher Education of the City of New York*, 1936, 284–309, Archives, City College of New York, City University of New York.
18. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Higher Education, June 9, 1936; *New York Times*, June 9, 1936, 46:8.
19. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Higher Education, June 9, 1936; Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 430; *New York Times*, June 10, 1936, 3:1; June 11, 1936, 3:5.
20. *New York Times*, June 11, 1936; Flynn to Lewis Mumford, June 12, 1936, Mumford Papers.
21. *New York Times*, June 22, 1936, 12:4.
22. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, June 12, 1936, Mumford Papers; Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 430; *New York Times*, September 23, 1936, 17:5.
23. Memorandum from D. M. Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, November 23, 1945,

- 11, Wayne S. Cole Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.
24. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, April 9, 1937, Mumford Papers; Flynn to Robert M. Hutchins, April 12, 1937, Box 18, Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, April 14, 1937, 23:7.
 25. Flynn to Hutchins, April 12, 1937; *New York Times*, July 24, 1937, 1:6.
 26. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, May 19, 1937, Mumford Papers; Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Higher Education, May 25, 1937, *Proceedings of the Board of Higher Education*, 1937, 299–300.
 27. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Higher Education, May 25, 1937; *New York Times*, October 31, 1937, 12:3.
 28. *New York Times*, September 18, 1936, 21:2; July 19, 1937, 11:1; Flynn to Lewis Mumford, September 9, 1937, Mumford Papers.
 29. Reminiscences of Ordway Tead, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1964, 1; *New York Times*, June 15, 1937, 25:5; Flynn to Lewis Mumford, June 11, September 9, and October 7, 1937, Mumford Papers.
 30. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, October 7, 1937, Mumford Papers.
 31. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, February 17, 1938, Box 18, Flynn Papers.
 32. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, February 18, 1938, Mumford Papers; Flynn to Paul J. Kern, February 18, 1938, Mumford Papers; Flynn to Fiorello H. LaGuardia, February 18, 1938, Mumford Papers.
 33. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, February 23, 1938, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Ordway Tead, July 5, 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
 34. *New York Times*, January 29, 1936, part 2, 9:8; Flynn to Paul J. Kern, February 18, 1938, Mumford Papers; Flynn to Lewis Mumford, July 5, 1938, Mumford Papers; Robert W. Iversen, *The Communists and the Schools* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 155–56.
 35. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, July 5, 1938, Mumford Papers; Iversen, *Communists and Schools*, 155–56.
 36. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, March 22 and July 5, 1938, Mumford Papers.
 37. Ibid.; Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 430–32; Reminiscences of Charles H. Tuttle, 26.
 38. Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 432; Flynn to Mumford, July 5, 1938, and August 17, 1939, Mumford Papers.
 39. Ray Monk, *Bertrand Russell: The Ghost of Madness, 1921–1970* (New York: Free Press, 2000), 231.
 40. Ibid., 232; *New York Times*, March 1, 1940, 23:6.
 41. *New York Times*, March 1, 1940, 23:6; Thom Weidlich, *Appointment Denied: The Inquisition of Bertrand Russell* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), 14–15; see also Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 448–450.
 42. “K. of C. Backs Manning Stand against Russell,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, March 4, 1940, clipping in Office of the President, Special Topics,

Russell, Bertrand, folder 1, Archives, City College of New York, CUNY; City College press release, March 15, 1940, *ibid.*; "Stand by Russell, Einstein Imploring," *New York World Telegram*, March 18, 1940, *ibid.*

43. Reminiscences of Charles H. Tuttle, 55–57; Weidlich, *Appointment Denied*, 29–30; Monk, *Bertrand Russell*, 232–33; Charles H. Tuttle to Board of Higher Education, March 9, 1940, Office of the President, Special Topics, Russell, Bertrand, folder 2, Archives, City College.

44. "Stand by Russell, Einstein Imploring"; Flynn, "Extracts from Professor Russell's Works," Office of the President, Special Topics, Russell, Bertrand, folder 1, Archives, City College.

45. "2-to-1 Indorsement Predicted in Vote on Bertrand Russell," *New York Herald Tribune*, March 7, 1940, clipping in Office of the President, Special Topics, Russell, Bertrand, folder 1, Archives, City College; "Many Who Voted Job to Russell Admit Ignorance of His Views," *New York Herald-Tribune*, March 8, 1940, *ibid.*; Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Higher Education, March 18, 1940, *Proceedings of the Board of Higher Education of the City of New York*, 1940, 183–91, Archives, City College of New York.

46. "Mrs. Jean Kay Sums Up Case," *New York Sun*, March 20, 1940, clipping in Office of the President, Special Topics, Russell, Bertrand, folder 1, Archives, City College; "Russell Accused of Liking Erotica," March 27, 1940, *ibid.*

47. August Heckscher, *When LaGuardia Was Mayor: New York's Legendary Years* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 272; Reminiscences of Charles H. Tuttle, 59–60; Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 448–50; "Briton's Teachings Called 'Filth' in Scathing Verdict," *New York Journal-American*, March 30, 1940, clipping in Office of the President, Special Topics, Russell, Bertrand, folder 1, Archives, City College.

48. Heckscher, *When LaGuardia Was Mayor*, 269–75; Reminiscences of Ordway Tead, 10; Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 448–50.

49. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Higher Education, April 15, 1940, *Proceedings of the Board of Higher Education*, 1940, 202–6, Archives, City College; *ibid.*, May 2, 1940, 289; Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 448–50.

50. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Higher Education, September 23, 1940, *Proceedings of the Board of Higher Education*, 1940, 590, Archives, City College; Weidlich, *Appointment Denied*, 169.

51. Rudy, *College of the City of New York*, 450–53. In 1981 the Board of Trustees of City College offered a formal apology to those who had been affected.

52. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Higher Education, December 16, 1940, *Proceedings of the Board of Higher Education*, 1940, 795, Archives, City College. In 1950, when Flynn was in the forefront of crusade against commu-

nism, he boasted that during his time on the board “over thirty members of the Communist Party were expelled from the colleges.” He did not mention that he had not been directly involved in any of this. Flynn to Edward Rumely, February 8, 1950, Box 17, Flynn Papers.

53. Norman Thomas to Oswald Garrison Villard, December 17, 1942, reel 13, Norman Thomas Papers, New York Public Library.

54. Heckscher, *When LaGuardia Was Mayor*, 282–83, 296–97; Reminiscences of Ordway Tead, 24; Flynn to Ordway Tead, July 5, 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers.

55. Reminiscences of Charles H. Tuttle, 25–26; Ordway Tead to Flynn, December 27, 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Ordway Tead, January 21, 1949, *ibid.*; Paul Klapper to Norman Thomas, May 5, 1945, reel 15, Norman Thomas Papers; *New York Times*, April 22, 1964.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. Flynn to Rush Holt, May 6, 1936, Box 19, Flynn Papers; “Tentative Program of Tamiment Labor Conference, 1936,” *ibid.*, Flynn to Willford I. King, April 12, 1938, Box 5, Folder 2, Willford I. King Papers, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon; Alvin Johnson to Flynn, January 15, 1935, Box 19, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Alvin Johnson, September 21, 1936, *ibid.*

2. Flynn to Willford I. King, April 28, 1938, Box 5, Folder 3, King Papers; Homer T. Bone to Erwin L. Davis, September 6, 1935, Box 20, Flynn Papers.

3. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 92 (August 18, 1937): 46.

4. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 81 (January 9, 1935): 245–46; (January 16, 1935): 275–76.

5. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 83 (June 12, 1935): 132–33; (June 19, 1935): 165.

6. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* (July 3, 1935): 193–94; *New Republic* 87 (July 8, 1936): 260–62.

7. Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 354–56.

8. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 87 (July 22, 1936): 324; *New Republic*, 91 (August 4, 1937): 362–63; *New York Times*, April 2, 1937, 13:2; John T. Flynn, “OPM: What the Coal Strike Is About,” *New Republic* 99 (May 10, 1939): 19; John T. Flynn, “OPM: Forecasts, Past and Future,” *New Republic* 99 (May 31, 1939): 101–2.

9. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 81 (January 2, 1935): 219–20; John T. Flynn, “For the Holding Company Bill,” *Forum* 93 (May 1935): 263–65.

10. Flynn to Thomas Corcoran, October 23, 1935, Corcoran Papers; Flynn, “For the Holding Company Bill,” 263; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 78 (May 2, 1934): 336–37.

11. Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 343–45; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 83 (May 29, 1935): 73.
12. See Chapter 3.
13. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 81 (December 26, 1934): 192–93; *New York Times*, June 29, 1935, 6:1.
14. Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 345–47; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 84 (August 14, 1935): 18–19.
15. John T. Flynn, “Inflation—When and How?” *Harper’s* 171 (June 1935): 1–10; John T. Flynn, “Inflation or Taxes,” *America’s Town Meeting of the Air* (radio broadcast), February 26, 1936, Box 16, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “The Devil to Pay,” *Commentator* 1 (April 1937): 14–18; John T. Flynn, “Soaking the Poor,” *Commentator* 2 (October 1937): 22–26; Mark H. Leff, *The Limits of Symbolic Reform: The New Deal and Taxation, 1933–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 103.
16. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 81 (February 6, 1935): 359; *New Republic* 82 (March 6, 1935): 101–2; (March 13, 1935): 130; *New Republic* 84 (September 18, 1935): 158–59; *New Republic* 85 (December 18, 1935): 172; *New Republic* 86 (April 1, 1936): 220–21; *New Republic* 90 (February 24, 1937): 73; *New Republic* 91 (June 9, 1937): 129; *New Republic* 92 (August 11, 1937): 19; John T. Flynn, “Steel Is Hot,” *Collier’s* 99 (February 27, 1937): 16–17.
17. John T. Flynn, “Father Coughlin—What Is He Driving At?” NEA Service, August 7, 1936, Box 13, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “The Townsend Plan—Would It Work?” December 31, 1935, *ibid.*
18. John T. Flynn, “Who but Hoover?” *New Republic* 85 (December 4, 1935): 92–95; John T. Flynn, “Hoover’s Apologia: An Audacious Torturing of History,” *Southern Review* 1 (Spring 1936): 721–30.
19. John T. Flynn, “Disparity in the American System,” *Vital Speeches* 1 (August 26, 1935): 773–76.
20. Flynn to Philip Troup, February 24, 1936, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn, “Disparity in the American System.”
21. Flynn, “Disparity in the American System”; Flynn, “Property Rights,” radio broadcast on WHN, New York University, April 22, 1936, Box 16, Flynn Papers.
22. Flynn to Thomas Corcoran, September 21, 1936, and October 23, 1935, Corcoran Papers; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 82 (February 27, 1935): 74–75; *New Republic* 85 (December 11, 1935): 129; *New Republic* 88 (October 21, 1936): 309.
23. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 82 (February 27, 1935): 74–75; *New Republic* 86 (March 25, 1936): 193–94; Flynn to S. A. Baldus, June 22, 1936, Box 17, Flynn Papers.
24. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 85 (November 27, 1935): 73–74;

(September 9, 1936): 129–30; NEA Service, August 1935, Box 13, Flynn Papers; Schlesinger, *Politics of Upheaval*, 88, 622. Flynn’s words about the “acquisitive writer” would come back to haunt him later; see the Conclusion.

25. Flynn to Lewis Mumford, September 9, 1936, Mumford Papers; Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 88 (October 21, 1936): 309; Flynn to Thomas Corcoran, September 21, 1936, Corcoran Papers.

26. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 84 (September 4, 1935): 102–3; Flynn to Thomas Corcoran, October 14, 1936, Corcoran Papers.

27. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 88 (September 23, 1936): 183–84; John T. Flynn, “Wanted: A Plan,” *Common Sense* 4 (April 1935): 12–14; John T. Flynn, “Both Parties are Wrong!” *Common Sense* 5 (June 1936): 7–9. For more on the League for Independent Political Action, see Karel Denis Bicha, “Liberalism Frustrated: The League for Independent Political Action, 1928–1933,” *Mid-America* 48:1 (1936): 19–28.

28. Flynn, broadcast on WEVD, October 6, 1936, Box 13, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 88 (October 28, 1936): 350; *New Republic* 89 (November 4, 1936): 17–18.

29. John T. Flynn, “A New NRA? What Roosevelt’s Second Term May Bring Forth,” *Common Sense* 5 (December 1936): 11–13; Flynn, “Roosevelt’s Second Term,” 425–34.

30. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 90 (March 3, 1937): 110–11; (March 10, 1937): 138; telegram from Burton K. Wheeler to Flynn, March 4, 1937, Box 20, Flynn Papers.

31. Statement before Senate Judiciary Committee on Supreme Court Proposal, April 1, 1937, Box 16, Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, April 2, 1937, 13:2; John T. Flynn, “The President and the Supreme Court,” *Southern Review* 3 (Summer 1937): 1–14; Leonard Baker, *Back to Back: The Duel between FDR and the Supreme Court* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 206–7.

32. Although Flynn himself would claim this later in his career, the accusation is flawed; while the decisions were announced in March and April, they had actually been reached back in December, long before Roosevelt unveiled his plan. Baker, *Back to Back*, 175–76.

33. John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 90 (April 28, 1937): 357–58.

34. Statement on Supreme Court Proposal.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. “Receipts—1939,” Box 32, Flynn Papers. Another third came from his articles in *Collier’s*, while his *New Republic* column, radio broadcasts, and lecture fees made up the remainder.

2. John T. Flynn, “This Setback in Business,” *Harper’s* 176 (January 1938): 198–205; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 92 (October 27, 1937): 15–16.

3. John T. Flynn, "OPM," *New Republic* 93 (November 10, 1937): 15–16; John T. Flynn, "Lamb of Wall Street," *Collier's* 101 (July 30, 1938): 11; John T. Flynn, "Scared Dollars," *Collier's* 103 (March 11, 1939): 12–13.
4. Flynn to Arthur M. Vandenberg, December 29, 1937, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn, "Scared Dollars," 12–13.
5. Flynn to Frank A. Fetter, January 4, 1938, Frank A. Fetter Papers, Manuscript Department, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
6. Flynn, "This Setback in Business," 204; Flynn to Leon Henderson, April 21, 1939, Box 18, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, "Taxation with Representation," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 14 (January 1938): 77–90; Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 127.
7. Flynn, "This Setback in Business," 204; Flynn, "Taxation with Representation," 77–90.
8. Flynn, "Program for Recovery," NEA Service, June 1939, Box 13, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, "OPM: One-Man Fight," *New Republic* 103 (October 28, 1940): 585; Flynn to Leon Henderson, January 12, 1938, Box 18, Flynn Papers.
9. Flynn, "OPM: One-Man Fight," 585; *New York Times*, March 1, 1939, 16:2.
10. John T. Flynn, "OPM: Saving the System," *New Republic* 100 (August 23, 1939): 74; John T. Flynn, "OPM: The Government as Investor?" *New Republic* 102 (January 1, 1940): 22–23.
11. Address at Tamiment Social and Economic Conference, June 24, 1938, Box 16, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, "Should a Joint Committee of Congress Be Appointed to Balance the Federal Budget?" *Congressional Digest* 19 (February 1940): 48–53; John T. Flynn, "OPM: 'Recovery' Sleight of Hand," *New Republic* 96 (September 14, 1938): 159–60; Flynn, "Scared Dollars," 12–13.
12. John T. Flynn, "But There is a Federal Deficit," *Commentator* 3 (June 1938): 53–57. For more on the administration's turn toward the so-called New Economics, see Dean L. May, *From New Deal to New Economics: The American Liberal Response to the Recession of 1937* (New York: Garland, 1981); and Donald T. Critchlow, "The Political Control of the Economy: Deficit Spending as a Political Belief, 1932–1952," *Public Historian* 3:2 (Spring 1981): 5–22.
13. John T. Flynn, "OPM," *New Republic* 93 (February 2, 1938): 365; John T. Flynn, "The Social Security 'Reserve' Swindle," *Harper's* 178 (January 1938): 238–48; *New York Times*, April 10, 1938, 29:2.
14. Flynn, "Social Security 'Reserve' Swindle," 242–43; John T. Flynn, "Should the Present Federal Social Security Policy Be Continued and Expanded?" *Congressional Digest* 18 (May 1939): 154–56.
15. John T. Flynn, "OPM," *New Republic* 93 (November 24, 1937): 74; (December 15, 1937), 169; Flynn, radio address on NBC, March 14, 1939, Box 14,

Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “OPM: Recovery and the Business Man,” *New Republic* 98 (March 22, 1939): 193.

16. John T. Flynn, “OPM: Let’s Look at the Record,” *New Republic* 97 (November 30, 1938): 99. Flynn was hardly the only progressive to hold a dim view of this sort of “interest-group democracy”; see Graham, *Encore for Reform*, 69–70.
17. John T. Flynn, “OPM: Defense on the Cuff,” *New Republic* 103 (August 26, 1940): 276.
18. Raymond Moley, *After Seven Years* (1939); see also James E. Sargent, “Raymond Moley and the New Deal: An Appraisal,” *Ball State University Forum* 18 (Summer 1977): 62–71.
19. John T. Flynn, “OPM: Portrait of Mr. Big,” *New Republic* 100 (October 4, 1939): 241–42; Flynn to Drew Pearson, November 28, 1939, Box 19, Flynn Papers.
20. Flynn to Burton K. Wheeler, August 9, 1938, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
21. Robert S. Allen to Flynn, November 14, 1939, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Drew Pearson to Flynn, November 16, 1939, *ibid.*
22. Flynn to Robert S. Allen, November 16, 1939, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Drew Pearson, November 20, 1939, *ibid.*
23. Drew Pearson to Flynn, November 27, 1939, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Robert S. Allen to Flynn, November 17, 1939, *ibid.*
24. Franklin D. Roosevelt to Wilbur L. Cross, July 7, 1939, photocopy in Drawer 1, Wayne S. Cole Papers, Hoover Presidential Library.
25. Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 180; Rosalie Gordon to Flynn, February 25, 1941, Box 17, Flynn Papers; “1940s Bestsellers,” at <http://www.caderbooks.com/best40.html>, accessed May 2, 2002.
26. John T. Flynn, *Country Squire in the White House* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1940); Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 180–81.
27. Hamilton Basso, “The Great Profile,” *New Republic* 103 (July 29, 1940): 146–47; *New York Times*, July 2, 1940, 19:3; *New York Times Book Review*, July 14, 1940, 15; Justus Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939–1941* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 162–63; Jerome E. Edwards, *The Foreign Policy of Col. McCormick’s Tribune, 1929–1941* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1971), 160–62; Rosalie Gordon to Flynn, February 25, 1941, Box 17, Flynn Papers.
28. *New York Times*, August 1, 1957, 3:1. When asked to comment on this, Flynn denied having any contact with the German embassy or any knowledge of the campaign to promote his book. See also Alton Frye, *Nazi Germany and the American Hemisphere, 1933–1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 135, 145.
29. John T. Flynn, “OPM: Sense about Social Security,” *New Republic* 98 (April 12, 1939): 278.

30. Diary entries, March 6, 1940, Box 32, Flynn Papers; Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon*, 159.
31. John T. Flynn, “OPM: Must We Draft Mr. R.?” *New Republic* 102 (May 20, 1940): 671; John T. Flynn, “OPM: Johnny, Get Your Gun,” *New Republic* 102 (May 27, 1940): 728; Flynn to Oswald Garrison Villard, August 6, 1940, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
32. Radio address on Red Network, NBC, November 3, 1940, Box 16, Flynn Papers.
33. Flynn to Alf M. Landon, November 22, 1940, Box 18, Flynn Papers.
34. Letters to the Editor, *New Republic* 103 (July 22, 1940): 120; “Mr. Flynn and the New Deal,” *New Republic* 103 (July 29, 1940): 133.
35. “Flynn Again,” *New Republic* 103 (August 5, 1940): 173.
36. Letters to the Editor, *New Republic* 103 (August 26, 1940): 279; (September 9, 1940): 355; Bruce Bliven to Flynn, September 11, 1940, Box 19, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Bruce Bliven, September 12, 1940, *ibid.*
37. Bruce Bliven to Flynn, November 4, 1940, Box 19, Flynn Papers.
38. Flynn to Bruce Bliven, November 8, 1940, Box 19, Flynn Papers; Bruce Bliven to Flynn, November 19, 1940, *ibid.*; “OPM,” *New Republic* 103 (November 18, 1940): 677.
39. Letters to the Editor, *New Republic* 103 (December 9, 1940): 792–94; John Haynes Holmes to Flynn, December 11, 1940, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Daniel Mebane to Flynn, November 25, 1940, Box 19, *ibid.*; H. L. Mencken to Flynn, January 31, 1941, Box 18, *ibid.* For more on the silencing of anti-FDR opinion in the media, see Richard W. Steele, “The Great Debate: Roosevelt, the Media, and the Coming of the War, 1940–1941,” *Journal of American History* 71 (June 1984): 69–92.
40. “Mr. Flynn Speaks for Himself,” *New Republic* 104 (February 3, 1941): 148–50.
41. *Ibid.*
42. See, for instance, Raimondo, *Reclaiming the American Right*.
43. Letters to the Editor, *New Republic* 103 (December 9, 1940): 792–94.
44. Bliven insisted that Flynn was fired because his column was preoccupied with “the alleged misdeeds of the New Deal,” which contradicted the magazine’s overall editorial policy. Bliven, *Five Million Words Later*, 200.
45. David Seideman, *The New Republic: A Voice of Modern Liberalism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1986), 81, 158–59; Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon*, 5.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. John T. Flynn, “OPM: First Person Singular,” *New Republic* 100 (September 6, 1939): 131. He expressed similar sentiments a week later in a rally spon-

sored by the Keep America Out of War Congress, which was attended by roughly fourteen hundred people. *New York Times*, September 13, 1939, 8:6.

2. Flynn to Walter Davenport, March 13, 1940, Box 1, *Uncensored Papers*, New York Public Library; *Uncensored* 17 (January 27, 1940): 2.

3. John T. Flynn, "OPM: War—It's Wonderful!" *New Republic* 100 (September 27, 1939): 214.

4. Minutes of Meeting of Governing Committee, Keep America Out of War Congress, October 30, 1939, Box 2, *Uncensored Papers*; *ibid.*, November 6, 1939; Remarks before Keep America Out of War Mass Meeting, Carnegie Hall, November 10, 1939, Box 16, 1939.

5. John T. Flynn, "The Armament Bandwagon," *New Republic* 98 (March 8, 1939): 121–23; John T. Flynn, "OPM: Hurray for War Profits!" *New Republic* 100 (November 1, 1939): 367–68; Flynn to Homer T. Bone, November 6, 1939, Box 20, Flynn Papers; diary entry for January 6, 1940, Box 32, *ibid.*; John T. Flynn, "OPM: Will the Armament Industry Save Us?" *New Republic* 101 (December 6, 1939): 193; John T. Flynn, "Should the Borrowing Powers of the New Deal Be Extended by Congress?" *Congressional Digest* 19 (January 1940): 32.

6. John T. Flynn, "OPM: The South American Bubble," *New Republic* 100 (October 25, 1939): 339–40; Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right*, 179; memorandum from D. M. Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, November 23, 1945, Wayne S. Cole Papers.

7. NEA Service, September 1938, Box 13, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, "OPM: Billions for Defense—Against What?" *New Republic* 102 (April 29, 1940): 575; John T. Flynn, "OPM: Why Should Youth Pay the War Bill?" *New Republic* 103 (September 23, 1940): 416–17.

8. John T. Flynn, "Nazi Economy: A Threat?" *Scribner's Commentator* 10 (August 1941): 19–26; Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon*, 34–37.

9. John T. Flynn, "OPM: War on the Home Front," *New Republic* 100 (September 20, 1939): 188; John T. Flynn, "Can Hitler Beat American Business?" *Harper's* 180 (February 1940): 321–28.

10. *New York Times*, February 16, 1941, 29:6; John T. Flynn, "OPM: Nice Settlements if You Can Get Them," *New Republic* 103 (July 22, 1940): 117; John T. Flynn, "Coming: A Totalitarian America," *American Mercury* 52 (February 1941): 151–57; John T. Flynn, "OPM: Patriotism Backfires," *New Republic* 103 (September 9, 1940): 352; John T. Flynn, "OPM: Happy Days Are Here Again," *New Republic*, 103 (September 16, 1940): 384–85; Ellis W. Hawley, *The New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly: A Study in Economic Ambivalence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 442.

11. Flynn to Bennett C. Clark, February 15, 1940, Box 20, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, "OPM: Who's Behind Hoover?" *New Republic* 102 (March 11, 1940): 345; Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon*, 275.

12. Flynn to Norman Thomas, August 6, 1940, reel 10, Norman Thomas Papers, New York Public Library; Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon*, 126; KAOWC press release, July 25, 1940, reel 68, Norman Thomas Papers; telegram from Flynn to Wendell Willkie, August 14, 1940, Box 20, Flynn Papers. To Flynn's disgust, Willkie refused to make a campaign issue of conscription. It would be the first of many instances in which the Republican candidate would disappoint the writer.
13. Flynn, "Notes on Formation of New York Chapter of America First Committee," undated, 2–3, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Norman Thomas, November 18, 1938, reel 8, Norman Thomas Papers; Flynn to Sidney Hertzberg, October 9, 1939, *Uncensored* Papers.
14. Flynn, "Notes on Formation," 1; R. Douglas Stuart to Flynn, August 17, 1940, Box 21, Flynn Papers.
15. Ruth Sarles, "A History of America First," unpublished manuscript, vol. 1, 5, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California; R. Douglas Stuart to Flynn, October 5, 1940, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle against Intervention* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 75.
16. Cole, *America First*, 30; Sarles, "A History of America First," 245.
17. Charles A. Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 426–27; Flynn, "Notes on Formation," 1–2; "Minutes of Special Meeting of Board of Directors of America First Committee Held Monday, October 7th," AFC Corporate Records Book, Robert E. Wood Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.
18. Sarles, "History of America First," vol. 1, 68; R. Douglas Stuart to Flynn, December 2, 1940, Box 285, America First Committee (AFC) Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California; Justus D. Doenecke, "Verne Marshall's Leadership of the No Foreign War Committee, 1940," *Annals of Iowa* 41 (Winter 1973): 1153–72.
19. Flynn, "Notes on Formation," 4.
20. Flynn to R. Douglas Stuart, January 6, 1941, Robert E. Wood Papers; Flynn, "Notes on Formation," 4–5.
21. Flynn, "Notes on Formation," 5–6.
22. Chester Bowles to Flynn, January 20, 1941, Box 16, Flynn Papers.
23. Flynn to R. Douglas Stuart, January 6, 1941, Wood Papers; Flynn, "Notes on Formation," 6–7; *New York Times*, January 28, 1941, 4:7.
24. Alice L. Dodge to Members of the Governing Committee, Keep America Out of War Congress, December 30, 1940, reel 10, Norman Thomas Papers; Frederick J. Libby to Executive Board and Branch Offices, National Council for the Prevention of War, June 4, 1941, reel 11, *ibid.*
25. Cole, *America First*, 91, 99.
26. Flynn to Robert M. La Follette, Jr., November 26, 1941, Box 20, Flynn

Papers; Program for National Anti-War Congress, Box 29, AFC Papers; *New York Times*, May 31, 1941, 9:2; Frederick J. Libby to Executive Board and Branch Offices, National Council for the Prevention of War, June 4, 1941, reel 11, Norman Thomas Papers; Norman Thomas to Margaret de Silver, August 8, 1941, *ibid.*; KAOWC press release, October 16, 1941, reel 68, *ibid.*

27. "Chapter Chatter," June 24, 1941, Wood Papers; Sarles, "History of America First," vol. 1, 70, 300; Minutes of the Meeting of the Women's Division of America First, August 5, 1941, Wood Papers; Flynn to Alfred W. Landon, August 29, 1941, Box 18, Flynn Papers.

28. Luigi Criscuolo to Robert E. Wood, October 22, 1941, Wayne S. Cole Papers; Charles A. McLain to Flynn, May 21, 1941, Box 71, Amos Pinchot Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.; "Fr. Curran Seeks to Oust John T. Flynn, 'America First' Chapter Head, Following Slight to Noted Priest, Is Report," *New York Enquirer*, undated, Box 279, AFC Papers; Sarles, "History of America First," vol. 1, 332–34.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. "Flynn Says President Proposes War," KAOWC press release, January 7, 1941, Box 29, AFC Papers.

2. *New York Times*, January 13, 1941, 5:1; January 26, 1941, 12:2; January 29, 1941, 5:6.

3. Gerald P. Nye to Flynn, January 24, 1941, Box 19, Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, February 13, 1941, 7:2; Cole, *America First*, 45.

4. *New York Times*, February 21, 1941, 1:7; *New York Post*, February 21, 1941, clipping in Box 200, AFC Papers; Norman Thomas to Dorothy Thompson, undated but probably late February 1941, Thomas Papers; Thomas to Herman Jaffe, February 26, 1941, *ibid.*

5. *New York Times*, February 21, 1941, 1:7; *New York Post*, February 21, 1941, clipping in Box 200, AFC Papers; Flynn, "Notes on Formation," 8.

6. Minutes for the first meeting of the New York Chapter of the America First Committee, January 23, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers.

7. *New York Times*, May 9, 1941, 12:1; memorandum from Ladd to Hoover, November 23, 1945, Wayne S. Cole Papers, 5; Cole, *America First*, 118–19.

8. Flynn to S. H. Hauck, August 4, 1941, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Flynn to S. H. Hauck, September 4, 1941, *ibid.*; Niel M. Johnson, *George Sylvester Viereck: German-American Propagandist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).

9. *New York Times*, April 17, 1941, 13:1; Flynn to James E. Sullivan, April 24, 1941, Box 188, AFC Papers; R. Douglas Stuart to Amos Pinchot, April 28, 1941, Box 71, Amos Pinchot Papers; *New York Times*, May 24, 1941, 1:4.

10. *New York Times*, May 24, 1941, 1:4; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 493–94.

11. Cole, *America First*, 125–26; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 494.
12. Sarles, “History of America First,” vol. 1, 332–34; John L. O’Connor to Flynn, May 28, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Flynn, “Notes on Formation,” 9–10.
13. Sarles, “History of America First,” vol. 1, 332–34; Flynn to Helen Milas, June 11, 1941, Box 194, AFC Papers; Midtown Chapter of AFC to Robert E. Wood, November 26, 1941, Box 284, *ibid.*; Chester Bowles to Flynn, October 25, 1941, Box 185, *ibid.*; Thomas L. Bursis to Flynn, July 5, 1941, Box 194, *ibid.*; Dorothy Dunbar Bromley to Flynn, August 2, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers.
14. Flynn, “Should Our Ships Convoy Materials to Britain?” *Town Meeting of the Air*, May 8, 1941, Box 24, Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, May 9, 1941, 9:5; July 4, 1941, 5:5; “Flynn Describes Occupation of Iceland as ‘One More Cunning Device’ to Lead towards War,” AFC press release, July 7, 1941, Box 212, AFC Papers; Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 494.
15. Talk by Flynn on WJZ and NBC Blue Network, June 26, 1941, Box 16, Flynn Papers; Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon*, 215–16; AFC press release, June 23, 1941, Box 176, AFC Papers.
16. Minutes of Meeting of Governing Committee, KAOWC, February 5, 1940, Box 2, *Uncensored* Papers; memorandum from Ladd to Hoover, November 23, 1945, Cole Papers, 4, 7; Flynn to Alfred W. Landon, August 29, 1941, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn, “Notes on Formation,” 11; see also Samuel Walker, “Communists and Isolationism: The American Peace Mobilization, 1940–1941,” *Maryland Historian* 4 (Spring 1973): 1–12.
17. Flynn demanded and was given equal time on NBC’s Blue Network to rebut this charge. Talk by John T. Flynn, NBC Blue Network, March 8, 1941, Box 16, Flynn Papers.
18. “The AFC: The Nazi Transmission Belt,” undated [March 1941], Box 177, AFC Papers.
19. “Text of John T. Flynn’s Statement as Released to the Press, Concerning the FRIENDS OF DEMOCRACY,” undated [March 1941], Box 177, AFC Papers; “9 Disclaim Attack on Flynn Group,” undated newspaper clipping, Box 21, Flynn Papers.
20. “9 Disclaim Attack on Flynn Group,” undated newspaper clipping, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Flynn to John Dewey, March 19, 1941, Box 17, Flynn Papers.
21. *New York Times*, April 27, 1941, 27:1. Goldstein had another reason for disliking Flynn: it will be recalled that only one year earlier Goldstein had brought suit against the Board of Higher Education for approving the hiring of Bertrand Russell. See Chapter 5.
22. Diary entry, Wednesday, October 8, 1941, Box 32, Flynn Papers.
23. John T. Flynn, *Men of Wealth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1941); Palmer Harman, “Eleven Men and a Lady,” *Saturday Review of Literature* 24 (May 31, 1941): 6; *New York Times*, June 4, 1941, 21:2.

24. Flynn to Quincy Howe, December 1, 1941, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Quincy Howe to Flynn, December 4, 1941, *ibid.* This was the cause of the incident nine years later, recounted in the Introduction, in which Flynn refused to shake the hand of Richard L. Simon.
25. Sarles, “History of America First,” vol. 1, 332–34; Flynn, “Notes on Formation,” 7–9; “British Agency in America Uses Hitler Policy against Jews, Negroes, and Catholics,” *In Fact* 23 (March 17, 1941), Box 178, AFC Papers.
26. Norman Thomas to Grace Milgram, July 28, 1941, reel 11, Norman Thomas Papers; Flynn, “Notes on Formation,” 8; Flynn to Fiorello LaGuardia, October 6, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; see also Edward S. Shapiro, “The Approach of War: Congressional Isolationism and Anti-Semitism, 1939–1941,” *American Jewish History* 74 (September 1984): 45–65.
27. Memo from Flynn to Miss Boettiger, undated, Flynn Papers; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 517; Confidential Memorandum for Members of Executive Committee, September 16, 1941, Flynn Papers.
28. Flynn to Clyde R. Miller, November 22, 1938, and January 20, 1938, Box 18, *ibid.*; John T. Flynn, “OPM: Open Letter to the FCC,” *New Republic* 94 (May 4, 1938): 395; John T. Flynn, “Radio: Medicine Show,” *American Scholar* 7 (October 1938): 430–37; John T. Flynn, “Is America’s Radio Industry Controlled by a Monopoly?” *Congressional Digest* 17 (December 1938): 308–9; Flynn to David Sarnoff, August 6, 1940, Box 19, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, “Radio: Intervention’s Trump,” *Scribner’s Commentator* 9 (April 1941): 45–49.
29. John E. Moser, “‘Gigantic Engines of Propaganda’: The 1941 Senate Investigation of Hollywood,” *The Historian* 63:4 (Summer 2001): 731–51.
30. *Ibid.*, 739–40; diary entry, Friday, August 1, 1941, Box 32, Flynn Papers; Flynn to R. K. Hines, August 5, 1941, *ibid.*; Flynn to Amos Pinchot, September 8, 1941, Amos Pinchot Papers; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 524.
31. “Minutes of America First Meeting for the Heads of Chapters,” August 14, 1941, Box 176, AFC Papers; Flynn to Gerald P. Nye, undated, Flynn Papers.
32. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, August 8, 1941, Wood Papers; diary entry, Thursday, August 28, 1941, Box 32, Flynn Papers.
33. Flynn to Gerald P. Nye, August 29, 1941, Flynn Papers; memorandum from Flynn to D. Worth Clark, undated [September 1941], *ibid.*
34. *New York Times*, September 12, 1941, 24:2.
35. Moser, “Gigantic Engines of Propaganda,” 742; *New York Times*, September 12, 1941, 24:2.
36. Robert E. Wood to Flynn, August 11, 1941, Wood Papers; Sarles, “History of America First,” vol. 1, 70.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 10

1. Flynn, “Notes on Formation,” 12; Lindbergh quoted in A. Scott Berg, *Lindbergh* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1998), 452.
2. Flynn, “Notes on Formation,” 12.
3. *Ibid.*, 12–13.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Flynn to Charles A. Lindbergh, September 15, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers.
6. Telegram from Flynn to Burton K. Wheeler, undated [April 1941], Box 195, AFC Papers; Charles Lindbergh to Flynn, May 2, 1941, Flynn Papers; Wayne S. Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle against American Intervention in World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974); Norman Thomas to R. Douglas Stuart, September 12, 1941; September 17, 1941; and September 23, 1941, reel 11, Norman Thomas Papers; Statement to the Press, undated [September 1941], Box 2, *Uncensored* Papers; Cole, *America First*, 148–49, 152–53; H. Smith Richardson to Flynn, September 23, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers.
7. Flynn claimed to have come away from the meeting convinced that Lindbergh was “a man who cannot work with others.” Diary entry, September 19, 1941, Box 32, Flynn Papers; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 541.
8. Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 81; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 541–42.
9. Flynn to D. Worth Clark, September 17, 1941, Flynn Papers. Ruth Sarles wrote in early October that “certain aspects of the investigation are so unsavory that I question the advisability of publicizing it any further.” A few weeks later Wood denied that it had ever been an AFC project, characterizing it instead as a private effort by Flynn. Moser, “Gigantic Engines of Propaganda,” 744–47. See also Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye*, 185–90.
10. Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 543.
11. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, October 13, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers.
12. Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 500–501.
13. Cole, *America First*, 116–17.
14. Sarles, “History of America First,” vol. 1, 332–34; Horace J. Haase to Edwin S. Webster, August 30, 1941, Box 194, AFC Papers; Robert E. Wood to Flynn, August 16, 1941, Box 284, *ibid.*; Flynn, “Notes on Formation,” 14–15.
15. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, October 13, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Stenohjem, *American First*, 47–51. For more on the evolution of Pinchot’s views, see Graham, *Encore for Reform*, 74–77; and Richard Polenberg, “The National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government, 1937–1941,” *Journal of American History* 52 (December 1965): 582–98.
16. Flynn to Charles A. Lindbergh, September 15, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Flynn, “Notes on Formation,” 13–14; Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 180; Cole, *America First*, 150.

17. Flynn, "Notes on Formation," 13–14; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 541; H. Dudley Swim to Robert E. Wood, September 17, 1941, Box 5, AFC Papers; Amos Pinchot to Robert E. Wood, September 15, 1941, Box 68, Amos Pinchot Papers.
18. Flynn, "Notes on Formation," 14–15.
19. Norman Thomas to R. Douglas Stuart, September 10 and 23, 1941, reel 11, Norman Thomas Papers; R. Douglas Stuart to Norman Thomas, September 26, 1941, *ibid.*; R. Douglas Stuart to Amos Pinchot, October 6, 1941, Box 71, Amos Pinchot Papers; Robert E. Wood to Katrina McCormick, October 7, 1941, Wood Papers; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, October 13, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Robert E. Wood to Flynn, October 17, 1941; R. Douglas Stuart to Robert E. Wood, November 27, 1941, Wood Papers.
20. "America First Members: Protest the President's Lawless Act!" undated [October 1941], Box 194, AFC Papers; diary entry, October 17, 1941, Box 32, Flynn Papers; "Flynn Charges Kearny Incident Created by Administration," AFC press release, undated [October 1941], Box 212, AFC Papers; *New York Times*, October 18, 1941, 3:4; Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 446.
21. Dorothy Detzer to Flynn, October 16, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; statement by Flynn before Senate Foreign Relations Committee, October 23, 1941, Box 14, *ibid.*; Sarles, "History of America First," vol. 1, 256; *New York Times*, October 24, 1941, 3:1; October 31, 1941, 1:7.
22. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, November 11, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Cole, *America First*, 164–65; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, August 8, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Henry R. Crist, December 4, 1941, Box 188, AFC Papers; Flynn to Lincoln Colcord, November 28, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, December 3, 1941, *ibid.*
23. "Paragraph on Possibility of Our Fleet Being Engaged in Far East," Box 19, Flynn Papers; Cole, *America First*, 192–93.
24. Flynn to H. Smith Richardson, December 23, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Sarles, "History of America First," vol. 2, 757–58.
25. Various letters and telegrams from chapter heads to R. Douglas Stuart, December 1941, Box 284, AFC Papers; Flynn to subchapter chairmen in New York area, December 10, 1941, Box 174, *ibid.*
26. Cole, *America First*, 194–95; R. Douglas Stuart to Amos Pinchot, December 17, 1941, Box 71, Amos Pinchot Papers.
27. Minutes of meeting of AFC, New York Chapter, December 16, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Kathryn Holmes, December 10, 1941, *ibid.*; Flynn to H. A. Crowe, December 12, 1941, *ibid.*; memorandum from D. M. Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, November 23, 1945, 3, Wayne S. Cole Papers.
28. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, December 22, 1941, Box 162, AFC Papers; Flynn to Amos Pinchot, February 10, 1942, Box 72, Amos Pinchot Papers; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 568, 587.

29. Flynn to H. Dudley Swim, February 5 and 10, 1942, Box 71, Amos Pinchot Papers; H. Dudley Swim to Amos Pinchot, February 9, 1942, Box 72, *ibid.*; Amos Pinchot to Flynn, February 11, 1942, Box 21, Flynn Papers. For more on Roosevelt's use of the FBI against his political enemies, see Kenneth O'Reilly, "A New Deal for the FBI: The Roosevelt Administration, Crime Control, and National Security," *Journal of American History* 69 (December 1982): 638–58.

30. Flynn to Amos Pinchot, February 12, 1942, Box 72, Amos Pinchot Papers.

31. Edwin Webster to Robert E. Wood, May 20 and 29, 1942, Box 285, AFC Papers; H. Dudley Swim to Robert E. Wood, May 11, 1942, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, May 11, 1942, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, May 18 and 25, 1942, Box 285, AFC Papers; Flynn to H. Dudley Swim, February 10 and May 27, 1942, Box 21, Flynn Papers.

32. Robert E. Wood to Flynn, June 3, 1942, Box 285, AFC Papers; Deputy Commissioner, Treasury Department, to Edwin L. Webster, June 22, 1942, *ibid.*; *New York Times*, July 3, 1942; Minutes of the Meeting of the AFC, New York Chapter, February 24, 1942, Box 72, Amos Pinchot Papers; Flynn to Amos Pinchot, March 4, 1942, *ibid.*

33. Robert E. Wood to Flynn, August 27, 1942, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, October 13, 1941, Box 21, *ibid.*

NOTES TO CHAPTER 11

1. Flynn to R. Bailey Stortz, October 19, 1942, Box 20, Flynn Papers.

2. "Plans for 1942," Box 32, Flynn Papers; John N. Wheeler to Flynn, July 6, 1942, Box 19, *ibid.*; Flynn to Frederick L. Allen, June 26, 1944; Frederick L. Allen to Flynn, July 3, 1944; Frederick L. Allen to Flynn, July 11, 1944; Flynn to Frederick L. Allen, February 28, 1944, all in Box 18, *ibid.*

3. Flynn quoted in Sarles, "History of America First," vol. 2, 424–25. Flynn regretted the fact that a number of prominent writers—himself chief among them—had worked so diligently for groups like America First that they had been able to write precious little in 1941. In a letter to Lindbergh, he expressed his fear that since so much of the journalistic output of that year had come from pro-intervention sources, future historians would take a dim view of the anti-interventionist movement. Flynn to Charles A. Lindbergh, December 29, 1941, Box 18, Flynn Papers; see also Flynn to John Cudahy, January 13, 1942, Box 17, *ibid.*

4. Flynn to Clarence Buddington Kelland, January 6, 1942, Box 18, Flynn Papers.

5. Flynn to Kelland, April 7, 1942, Box 18, Flynn Papers.

6. Flynn to Carroll Reese, April 21, 1942, Box 21, Flynn Papers.

7. Flynn to R. Bailey Stortz, October 19, 1942, Box 20, Flynn Papers.

8. "Plans for 1943," December 27, 1942, Box 32, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Clark H. Getts, February 4, 1943, Box 18, *ibid.*; Clark Getts to Rosalie Gordon, September 25, 1943, Box 18, *ibid.*; Clark H. Getts to Flynn, August 2, 1943, Box 18, *ibid.*
9. John T. Flynn, "That Post-War Federal Debt," *Harper's* 185 (July 1942): 180–88.
10. Flynn to Homer T. Bone, April 3, 1942, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
11. *Ibid.*; John T. Flynn, "The Rover Boys in Washington," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 26, 1942, Box 14, Flynn Papers.
12. John T. Flynn, *As We Go Marching* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1944).
13. See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (New York: Mariner, 2004).
14. John T. Flynn, *Meet Your Congress* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1944).
15. Danton Walker, "Broadway," March 24, 1944, Box 1, Flynn Papers; "What America Is Reading," *New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review*, April 23, 1944, *ibid.*; Frey, "John T. Flynn," 245.
16. Oswald Garrison Villard, "The American Road to Fascism," Box 1, Flynn Papers; Oswald Garrison Villard to George E. Sokolsky, February 14, 1944, Box 117, Folder 10, George E. Sokolsky Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California; "As We Go Marching—to Fascism." *Peace Action of the National Council for Prevention of War* 10:1 (January 1944), Box 1, Flynn Papers; Walter Trohan, "Flynn Warns That Nation Is Moving Fast toward Fascism," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, February 6, 1944, 9; Benjamin DeCasseres, "Books," *New York Journal American*, December 31, 1944, Box 3, Flynn Papers; Igor Sikorsky to Flynn, February 17, 1944, Box 1, *ibid.*; William Henry Regnery to Flynn, March 1, 1944, *ibid.*; Merwin K. Hart to Flynn, February 11, 1944, *ibid.*
17. Robert E. Wood to Flynn, February 3, 1944, Box 5, Wood Papers; Sydney Justin Harris, "John T. Flynn Finds a Fascist Bogeyman Hiding under Franklin Roosevelt's Bed," *Chicago Sun-Times*, February 2, 1944, Box 1, Flynn Papers; Cortez A. M. Ewing, "Flynn Is Back in Horse and Buggy Period," *Oklahoma City Oklahoman*, December 3, 1944, Box 3, *ibid.*; Malcolm Cowley, "Books in Review: Who's Fascist Now?" *New Republic* 110 (February 21, 1944): 246–47; Sterling North, "John T. Flynn Is Sure Fascism Has Arrived; He's Not Always Right," *Washington Post*, February 13, 1044, 13S, Box 1, Flynn Papers; Hal Borland, "Beating a Retreat into the Future," *Saturday Review of Literature* 27 (February 12, 1944): 12–13.
18. Flynn to Helen Clarkson, September 8, 1943, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Clark Getts to Flynn, May 8, 1944, *ibid.*; Francis G. Wilson to Flynn, May 22, 1944, *ibid.*; Clark Getts to Flynn, October 30, 1944, *ibid.*

19. John Roy Carlson [pseudonym for Avedis Derounian], *Under Cover* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1943).
20. Ibid., 239–60; Clark K. Getts to Flynn, August 2, 1943, Box 18, Flynn Papers.
21. Merwin K. Hart to Burton K. Wheeler, January 4, 1944, Box 24, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, May 4, 1942, Box 5, Wood Papers; Flynn to Burton K. Wheeler, December 30, 1943, Box 24, *ibid.*
22. Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 273–75; Flynn, “The Smear Offensive: A Report,” March 1944, Box 5, Wood Papers.
23. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, March 23, 1944, Box 5, Wood Papers; Flynn, “Memorandum on Friends of Democracy,” undated but probably March 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
24. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, April 7, 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
25. Ibid.; G. W. Robnett to Flynn, June 27, 1944; John George and Laird Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen and Others on the Fringe: Political Extremism in America* (New York: Prometheus, 1992), 234.
26. Walter L. Reynolds to Flynn, March 26, 1943, Box 19, Flynn Papers; Flynn, *As We Go Marching*, 253–54; Flynn to Robert Wood, April 7, 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
27. G. W. Robnett to Flynn, June 27, 1944; Flynn to G. W. Robnett, July 5, 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Martin Dies, July 14, 1944, *ibid.*
28. Robert Wood to Flynn, April 12, 1944, Box 5, Wood Papers; Robert Wood to Flynn, May 25, 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Martin Dies, July 14, 1944.
29. Telephone call from Martin Dies, July 19, 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to George Washington Robnett, July 20, 1944, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robnett, August 23, 1944, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robnett, November 21, 1944, *ibid.*; Richard Gid Powers, *Not without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 189.
30. Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, September 20, 1944, Box 30, File 2, Barnes Papers.
31. Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, November 3, 1944, Box 30, File 2, Barnes Papers; J. Loy Mahoney to Flynn, October 19, 1944, Box 9, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, Box 5, Wood Papers.
32. John T. Flynn, “The Truth about Pearl Harbor,” *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, October 22, 1944; Justus D. Doenecke, *Not to the Swift: The Old Isolationists in the Cold War Era* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1979). Flynn’s work would be the first in a whole genre of Pearl Harbor revisionism; see Robert H. Ferrell, “Pearl Harbor and the Revisionists,” *Historian* 17 (Spring 1955): 215–33.
33. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, April 8, 1943, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Arthur H. Vandenberg to Robert E. Wood, September 15, 1943, Box 17, Wood Papers.

34. Flynn to R. Bailey Stortz, October 19, 1942, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Herbert Brownell, Jr., to Flynn, July 25, 1944, Box 19, *ibid.*; Flynn to G. W. Robnett, November 21, 1944, Box 20, *ibid.*; Harry Waldron to Flynn, August 25, 1944, *ibid.*
35. John T. Flynn, "I Shall Vote for Mr. Dewey," *Baltimore American*, October 29, 1944, clipping in Box 3, Flynn Papers.
36. Flynn to DeWitt Wallace, November 8, 1944, Box 19, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, November 9, 1944, Box 30, File 4, Barnes Papers; Flynn to Harry Waldron, November 21, 1944, Box 20, Flynn Papers.
37. Merwin K. Hart to Flynn, November 2, 1944, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Felix Morley, November 16, 1944, Box 14, Felix Morley Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; Merwin K. Hart to Flynn, November 30, 1944, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to G. W. Robnett, November 21, 1944, Box 20, *ibid.*; Merwin K. Hart to Flynn, March 11, 1945, Box 18, *ibid.*; Flynn to Merwin K. Hart, March 21, 1945, *ibid.*
38. Flynn to Felix Morley, November 16, 1944, Box 14, Morley Papers.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 12

1. By this time, of course, Franklin Roosevelt had died and was succeeded in office by Harry Truman. However, Flynn seemed to see little difference between the two men and their presidencies.
2. Flynn to Howard Buffett, September 13, 1948, Box 8, Flynn Papers.
3. John T. Flynn, "Insidious Propaganda," *Vital Speeches* 13 (December 1, 1946): 110–14. See also John T. Flynn, *The Smear Terror* (New York: The Author, 1947), 30.
4. Flynn to Henry Regnery, August 1, 1949, Box 19, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Robert Wood, December 29, 1948, Box 5, Wood Papers; Flynn to Charles Carle, November 13, 1948, Box 8, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Oswald Garrison Villard, November 23, 1948, *ibid.*; Flynn to J. Howard Pew, January 17, 1950, Box 19, *ibid.*
5. John T. Flynn, *The Epic of Freedom* (Philadelphia: Fireside Press, 1947); J. H. Gipson to Flynn, May 6, 1947, Box 18, Flynn Papers. Clark Getts tried briefly to interest Hollywood director John Ford in producing a film based on the book, but this went nowhere. Clark Getts to Flynn, April 16, 1947, *ibid.*
6. "The New Plan for a Writers Authority," undated, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Flynn to DeWitt Wallace, September 12, 1946, Box 19, *ibid.*
7. "American Writers Association: Membership List," Box 17, Flynn Papers; Flynn to DeWitt Wallace, September 12, 1948, Box 19, *ibid.*; Flynn to Edna Lonigan, January 19, 1949, Box 17, *ibid.*; John Dos Passos, "Why We Have to Have a Writers' Association," American Writers' Association, *ibid.*
8. Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, November 9, 1944, Box 30, File 4, Barnes

Papers; Flynn to Robert McCormick, September 17, 1945, Box 18, Flynn Papers; John Roy Carlson [pseudonym for Avedis Derounian], *The Plotters* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1946), 281–84; see also Doenecke, *Not to the Swift*, 94.

9. Hart quoted in Carlson, *The Plotters*, 281; Flynn to Merwin K. Hart, September 27, 1945, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Gen. Walter C. Short, September 27, 1945, Box 9, *ibid.*; Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, February 26, 1946, Box 32, File 1, Barnes Papers.

10. Flynn to Bertrand W. Gearhart, July 15, 1946, Box 9, Flynn Papers; Frank B. Keefe to Flynn, July 18, 1946, *ibid.*; Flynn to Frank B. Keefe, July 19, 1946, *ibid.*; Flynn to Frederick J. Libby, July 27, 1946, Box 331, Folder 6, National Council for the Prevention of War Papers, New York Public Library; Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, August 6, 1946, Box 32, File 2, Barnes Papers.

11. Flynn to Harry Waldron, March 23, 1948, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to John B. Trevor, October 4, 1948, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robert A. Taft, October 9, 1948, *ibid.*; Flynn to Gen. Bonner Fellers, November 6, 1948, Box 17, *ibid.*; Flynn to Chauncey McCormick, November 13, 1948, Box 8, *ibid.*; Flynn to Ed Craney, November 13, 1948, *ibid.*; Flynn to George B. Harris, December 29, 1948, Box 18, *ibid.*

12. Flynn to Henry Regnery, August 1, 1949, Box 19, Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, January 25, 1949, 25:7; Flynn to William M. Taylor, November 19, 1949, Box 5, Flynn Papers.

13. Carlson, *The Plotters*, 288–89; Flynn, *Smear Terror*, 26; memorandum from D. M. Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, November 23, 1945, Wayne S. Cole Papers.

14. Flynn to Archbishop Francis J. Spellman, January 29, 1946, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to William H. Gaines, September 23, 1948, Box 8, *ibid.*; Flynn to Walter F. George, March 24, 1949, Box 20, *ibid.*; Flynn to George S. Schuyler, February 4, 1950, *ibid.*; Flynn to Westbrook Pegler, November 2, 1950, Box 20, Westbrook Pegler Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; see also Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right*, 277–78.

15. George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945* (2d ed., Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996), 14–15; Carlson, *The Plotters*, 178–83.

16. Flynn to Westbrook Pegler, December 9, 1946, Box 20, Pegler Papers; Flynn to George E. Sokolsky, December 9, 1946, Box 50, Folder 5, Sokolsky Papers; Flynn, *Smear Terror*.

17. Although it bore a similar name, this group had no affiliation with the America First Committee. Smith's appropriation of America First offended Flynn deeply, but the writer was unsuccessful in his efforts to persuade Smith to change the name. Flynn to Gertrude Colles, June 8, 1945, Box 9, Flynn Papers.

18. “A Report on Flynn: The Story of an Ex-Liberal,” *Democracy’s Battle* 7:24 (December 15, 1949); Flynn, “John Roy Carlson: Curious Phenomenon,”

Catholic World 164 (March 1947): 516–22; Rosalie Gordon to S. O. Sanderson, October 2, 1945, Box 9, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Court Asher, October 10, 1945, *ibid.*; Flynn to *The Cross and the Flag*, January 4, 1946, Box 20, *ibid.*; Gerald L. K. Smith to Flynn, January 9, 1946, *ibid.*; Flynn to Southern Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, September 29, 1949, Box 18, *ibid.*; George E. Sokolsky to Flynn, December 16, 1946, Box 50, Folder 5, Sokolsky Papers; for more on this, see also Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 192–93.

19. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, December 3, 1941, Box 21, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Nathan Straus, April 27, 1944, Box 20, *ibid.*; Clark Getts to Flynn, June 25, 1946; July 30, 1947; and January 26, 1948, all in Box 18, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, January 9, 1947, Box 20, *ibid.*

20. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, June 2, 1947. Clark Getts to Flynn, June 2, 1947; September 6, 1947; and April 24, 1948, all in Box 18, Flynn Papers; Robert E. Wood to George Dryden, August 28, 1947, Box 33, Wood Papers; Dorothy R. Jones to Flynn, May 11, 1948, Box 18, Flynn Papers.

21. Clark Getts to Flynn, July 4, 1948, July 23, 1948, and July 13, 1949, all in Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, November 1, 1949, Box 20, *ibid.*; Clark Getts to Harry Waldron, November 7, 1949, Box 18, *ibid.*

22. Henry Regnery to Robert E. Wood, August 7, 1949, Box 80, Henry Regnery Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California; Clark Getts to Flynn, August 10, 1949, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Clark Getts, “Selling One Station,” undated, *ibid.*

23. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, November 1, 1949, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Edward F. Hutton, September 12, 1949, Box 17, *ibid.*

24. Flynn to Gerald P. Nye, January 24, 1945, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn to John L. Lewis, February 5, 1945, Box 18, *ibid.*; John T. Flynn, *The Roosevelt Myth* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1948).

25. Flynn, *Roosevelt Myth*, chaps. 9–14.

26. Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, June 2, 1948, Box 34, File 2, Barnes Papers; Flynn to George W. Davison, October 22, 1948, Box 8, Flynn Papers; diary entry, Thursday May 1948, Box 32, *ibid.*

27. Doenecke, *Not to the Swift*, 97–98.

28. William H. Regnery to Flynn, August 18, 1948, Box 8, Flynn Papers; Flynn to William H. Regnery, August 23, 1948, and August 26, 1948, *ibid.*; Flynn to Frederick J. Libby, September 2, 1948, Box 331, Folder 6, National Council for the Prevention of War Papers; Frank E. Mason to William H. Regnery, September 15, 1948, and October 21, 1948, Box 8, Flynn Papers.

29. Robert E. Wood to Hughston McBain, September 28, 1948, Box 10, Wood Papers; Flynn to John D. Ubinger, October 16, 1948, Box 8, Flynn Papers; Amy Loveman to Devin-Adair Co., September 1, 1948, *ibid.*; Joan Hitchcock to

Robert E. Moore, September 3, 1948, *ibid.*; Flynn to C. H. Collier, October 16, 1948, *ibid.*; Charles J. Rolo, "Roosevelt: Myth and More Myth," *Atlantic Monthly* (October 1948), *ibid.*; Sam Adkins, "John T. Flynn's 'The Roosevelt Myth' Is a Viciously One-Sided Critique," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, September 26, 1948, *ibid.*; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "John T. Flynn on the F.D.R. Era," *New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review*, November 7, 1948, *ibid.*; Asher Byrnes, "John Flynn's Portrait of F.D.R.," *Plain Talk* (November 1948): 45–49, *ibid.*

30. Alf M. Landon to Flynn, October 28, 1948, Box 8, Flynn Papers; Walter Trohan, "Fantasies of New Deal Reviewed by John T. Flynn," *Chicago Tribune*, September 5, 1948, *ibid.*; Rose Wilder Lane, "Review of The Roosevelt Myth," *Economic Council Review of Books*, 5:8 (August 1948), *ibid.*; Frederick J. Libby, "The Roosevelt Myth," *Peace Action* (September 1948), *ibid.*; Flynn to George Morgenstern, September 10, 1948, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, November 1, 1949, Box 20, *ibid.*

31. William H. Regnery to Flynn, August 18, 1948, Box 8, Flynn Papers; Clark K. Getts to Harry Waldron, November 7, 1949, Box 18, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, November 1, 1949, Box 20, *ibid.*

32. John T. Flynn, *The Road Ahead: America's Creeping Revolution* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1949).

33. "Pleasantville Politics," *The Nation* 170 (February 18, 1950): 147; Sterling North, "Sterling North Reviews the Books," *New York World Telegram*, October 26, 1949, Box 6, Flynn Papers; "Journalism at Less than Its Best," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, undated, *ibid.*; Karl Schriftgiesser, "Signs of Hysteria?" *New York Times Book Review*, October 2, 1949, *ibid.*; Samuel McCrea Cavert, "The Truth about the Federal Council: An Official Reply to John T. Flynn," *The Churchman*, undated, Box 5, *ibid.*; *New York Times*, April 21, 1950, 16:2; "Attacking the Federal Council," *Christian Century* 67 (January 4, 1950): 6–7; John Foster Dulles to Flynn, January 4, 1950, Box 5, Flynn Papers.

34. Westbrook Pegler, "Flynn's New Book Shows Socialism Is Communism," *Chicago Tribune*, October 11, 1949, Box 5, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Walter Trohan, October 7, 1949, and October 19, 1949, Box 22, Walter Trohan Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa; Kazin, *Populist Persuasion*, 173.

35. Robert W. Johnson to Westbrook Pegler, October 12, 1949, Box 20, Pegler Papers; Frank Gannett to Flynn, October 12, 1949, Box 5, Flynn Papers; George Peck to Flynn, November 11, 1949, *ibid.*; *New York Times*, December 9, 1949, 25:2; Everett M. Dirksen to S. R. Hurt, September 9, 1950, Box 5, Flynn Papers; Michael W. Miles, *The Odyssey of the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 25–27.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 13

1. #Z269 Daily Transcribed Series for Wednesday, June 3, 1953, Box 15, Flynn Papers; Doenecke, *Not to the Swift*, 233.
2. Flynn to Irving Ferman, November 8, 1952, Box 17, Flynn Papers; *New York Times*, April 6, 1953, 7:2; John T. Flynn, "Have We the Brains to Be Free?" *The Freeman* 3:13 (March 23, 1953): 452–54; "BtH: Two Kinds of Democrats," 178–K214, September 28, 1952, Box 14, Flynn Papers. Flynn had learned of the correspondence between FDR and *Yale Review* editor Wilbur Cross (discussed in Chapter 7) in 1951. Flynn to Eugene Davidson, August 15, 1951, Box 20, *ibid.*
3. Clark Getts to Flynn, April 13, 1950, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Joe McCarthy, December 30, 1952, Box 20, *ibid.*; #27 Daily Transcribed Series for Tuesday, July 1, 1952, Box 15, *ibid.*; *New York Times*, February 3, 1953, 9:2; Powers, *Not Without Honor*, 263; Thomas C. Reeves, *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy: A Biography* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 467.
4. Brooklyn Colony—National Society of New England Women, May 6, 1954, Box 16, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, *McCarthy: His War on American Reds, and the Story of Those Who Oppose Him* (New York: America's Future, 1954).
5. Flynn to Willis J. Ballinger, February 13, 1953, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Clare E. Hoffman, March 9, 1953, *ibid.*; Flynn to B. Carroll Reese, April 20, 1953, Box 20, *ibid.*; Flynn to H. S. Richardson, December 21, 1953, Box 19, *ibid.*; Flynn, "The Lair of the Creepies," manuscript submitted to *American Legion Magazine*, December 30, 1953, Box 12, *ibid.*
6. Report on Alfred Kohlberg, September 1949, Box 17, Alfred Kohlberg Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California; Doenecke, *Not to the Swift*, 178; Reeves, *Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*, 220–21; "BtH: China," May 8, 1949, Box 14, Flynn Papers.
7. "BtH: Our Stake in Asia," 64, July 23, 1950, Box 14, Flynn Papers; "BtH: Who Is Next on Stalin's List," 65, July 30, 1950, *ibid.*; "BtH: Save Korea—but Don't Forget America," 66, August 6, 1950, *ibid.*
8. Harry Elmer Barnes to Lawrence Dennis, December 18, 1950, and December 12, 1951, Box 2, Lawrence Dennis Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California; Flynn, "Editorial for The Freeman," October 19, 1950, Box 12, Flynn Papers; "BtH: Fighting for Survival—of What?" 88, January 7, 1951, Box 14, *ibid.*
9. "BtH: Let's Change the United Nations," 76, October 15, 1950, Box 14, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Burton K. Wheeler, January 24, 1951, Box 20, *ibid.*; "BtH: The End of the United Nations," 219–K255, July 11, 1953, Box 14, *ibid.*; Flynn, untitled manuscript for *The Freeman*, December 16, 1954, Box 12, *ibid.*; Flynn, "Editorial with Octopus Drawing," manuscript for *Judge* magazine, September 15, 1953, Box 13, *ibid.*

10. John T. Flynn, *While You Slept: Our Tragedy in Asia and Who Made It* (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair, 1951).
11. John T. Flynn, *The Lattimore Story* (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair, 1953); Edward A. Rumely to Robert E. Wood, January 24, 1953, Box 14, Wood Papers.
12. “BtH: Stalin’s Plan for America,” 117, July 29, 1951, Box 14, Flynn Papers; “BtH: What Inflation Is Doing to Us,” 141, January 13, 1952, *ibid.*
13. Howard Rushmore, “The Subversive Front: Spotlight on Spy Ring,” *New York Journal American*, April 18, 1953, Box 3, Flynn Papers; John B. Oakes, “U.S. Policy toward China,” *New York Times Book Review*, December 2, 1951, Box 10, *ibid.*; Flynn to J. B. Matthews, March 27, 1953, Matthews Papers; Harry Elmer Barnes to Flynn, April 15, 1953, and Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, April 21, 1953, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Freda Utley, “Review of *While You Slept*,” *Economic Council Review of Books* 8:12 (December 1951), Box 10, *ibid.*; memorandum from E. A. Rumely re: *The Lattimore Story* by John T. Flynn, April 1, 1953, Box 3, *ibid.*
14. Harry Elmer Barnes to Flynn, April 15, 1953, Box 15, Flynn Papers; Alfred Kohlberg to Devin A. Garrity, March 8, 1953, Box 3, *ibid.*; Brent Bozell to Flynn, April 20, 1953, *ibid.*; Robert H. W. Welch to Flynn, June 29, 1953, Box 20, *ibid.*
15. Flynn to Robert A. Taft, April 6, 1950, Box 20, Flynn Papers; #32 Daily Transcribed Series for Tuesday, July 8, 1952, Box 15, *ibid.*; Flynn to Guy Gabrielson, April 19, 1950, Box 19, *ibid.*; “BtH: Do We Need New Parties?” 154, April 13, 1952, Box 14, *ibid.*
16. “Paragraphs,” *The Freeman*, October 17, 1950, Box 12, Flynn Papers; “BtH: Skullduggery in Texas,” 162, June 8, 1952, Box 14, *ibid.*; #26 Daily Transcribed Series for Monday, June 30, 1952, Box 15, *ibid.*; #31 Daily Transcribed Series for Monday, July 7, 1952, *ibid.*; #11 Daily Transcribed Series for Monday, June 9, 1952, *ibid.* Flynn also disapproved of Eisenhower’s choice of running mate, Richard Nixon, whose “economic and social creed . . . conforms to that of Governor Warren. And if Warren is a Republican I most certainly am not.” Flynn to J. H. Gipson, July 29, 1952, Box 18, *ibid.*
17. #141 Daily Transcribed Series for Monday, December 8, 1952, Box 15, Flynn Papers; “BtH: Labor and the Cabinet,” 189-K225, December 14, 1952, Box 14, *ibid.*; “BtH: Investigations to Come,” 195-K231, January 25, 1953, *ibid.*; “BtH: The President Takes Hold,” 200-K236, March 1, 1953, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robert McCormick, January 21, 1953, Box 18, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robert B. Dresner, June 9, 1953, Box 17, *ibid.*; John T. Flynn, “Mr. Dulles and ‘Hands across the Sea,’” *American Mercury* 77 (October 1953): 25–30; John T. Flynn, “Our Phoney War on Communism,” *American Mercury* 78 (February 1954): 17–21; untitled manuscript for *The Freeman*, August 19, 1954, Box 12, Flynn Papers.

18. Flynn to Robert E. Wood, September 9, 1952, Box 5, Wood Papers; Flynn to Myron C. Fagan, September 10, 1952, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Flynn to John Chamberlain, June 19, 1950, Box 17, *ibid.*; Flynn to Suzanne La Follette, July 14, 1950, *ibid.*; Flynn to Russell Maguire, January 22, 1953, Box 18, *ibid.*; Flynn to L. C. Walker, February 9, 1953, Box 20, *ibid.*; Flynn to Frank Chodorov, July 6, 1954, Box 17, *ibid.*; Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 21–22.
19. Polenberg, “National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government,” 582–98.
20. Edward A. Rumely to Flynn, October 20, 1949, Box 5, Flynn Papers; Edward Rumely to Flynn, November 2, 1949, Box 17, *ibid.*; memorandum by Rumely, November 8, 1949, *ibid.*; Edward Rumely to Devin Garrity, November 16, 1949, *ibid.*; Flynn to J. Howard Pew, January 17, 1950, Box 19, *ibid.*
21. Edward A. Rumely to Devin Garrity, February 3, 1950, and June 24, 1950, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Fred J. Cook, *The Nightmare Decade: The Life and Times of Senator Joe McCarthy* (New York: Random House, 1971), 72; Edward Rumely to Flynn, April 14, 1950, Box 17, Flynn Papers; mass mailing by Flynn, April 27, 1951, *ibid.* An appeals court overturned the conviction in April 1952, ruling that it interfered with “the freedom of people to attempt to influence other people by books and other public writings.” Lawyer Service Letter, New York State Bar Association, Letter No. 165, May 21, 1952, Box 45, Folder 5, King Papers. The Supreme Court upheld this decision in 1953.
22. Flynn to Clark H. Getts, October 29, 1949, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Clark H. Getts to Flynn, November 5, 1949; November 6, 1949; February 28, 1950; March 20, 1950; and May 20, 1950, all *ibid.*
23. Edward A. Rumely to Flynn, June 19, 1950, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Robert L. Lund, July 5, 1950, *ibid.*; Clark H. Getts to Flynn, July 19, 1950, Box 18, *ibid.*
24. Edward Rumely to Robert L. Lund, July 17, 1950, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Clark H. Getts to Flynn, July 19, 1950, Box 18, *ibid.*
25. Clark H. Getts to Flynn, July 24, 1950; August 12, 1950; and August 21, 1950, all in Box 18, Flynn Papers.
26. Flynn to Clark H. Getts, October 30, 1950, and November 27, 1950, Box 18, Flynn Papers.
27. James H. Foster to Isabel Rumely, June 28, 1951, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Ernest T. Weir, August 19, 1952, Box 20, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robert L. Lund, October 24, 1952, Box 47, Folder 22, King Papers; Flynn to Robert L. Lund, May 21, 1952, Box 45, Folder 5, *ibid.*
28. “BtH: War in the Schools,” 6, June 12, 1949, Box 14, Flynn Papers; Flynn, “Shall Teachers with Communist Affiliations Be Purged from Our Schools?” Debate with Homer P. Rainey, Milwaukee Town Hall, November 7, 1949, Box 16, *ibid.*

29. Lucille Cardin Crain to John T. Flynn, September 1, 1950, and October 23, 1950, Box 34, Folder 21, Lucille Cardin Crain Papers, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon; Mary Anne Raywid, *The Ax-Grinders: Critics of Our Public Schools* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 123–24; Jack Nelson and Gene Roberts, Jr., *The Censors and the Schools* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 40–41.

30. Flynn to Lucille Cardin Crain, April 28, 1950; May 8, 1950; and May 27, 1953, all in Box 34, Folder 22, Crain Papers; Nelson and Roberts, *Censors and the Schools*, 42; Flynn to Lucille Cardin Crain, September 14, 1951, Box 17, Flynn Papers.

31. “BtH: Answers to Some Criticisms,” 135, December 2, 1951, Box 14, Flynn Papers; Rosalie Gordon to Lucille C. Crain, November 11, 1952, Box 34, Folder 22, Crain Papers; Flynn to Lucille Cardin Crain, March 26, 1951, and December 5, 1951, *ibid.*; Flynn to Russell Maguire, June 23, 1952, *ibid.*; Flynn to David I. Johnston, July 31, 1952, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Edward A. Rumely, November 1, 1951, *ibid.*; John T. Flynn, *They War on Our Schools* (New Rochelle, NY: America’s Future, 1952).

32. Flynn, *They War on Our Schools*; J. B. Matthews to Flynn, December 10, 1952, Matthews Papers; George W. Robnett to Flynn, December 10, 1952, Box 16, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Raymond R. Brown, December 12, 1952, *ibid.*; Alfred Kohlberg to Flynn, December 26, 1952, Box 64, Kohlberg Papers; Flynn to Burt MacBride, January 21, 1953, Box 19, Flynn Papers.

33. Nelson and Robert, *Censors and the Schools*, 43; Raywid, *The Ax-Grinders*, 123–24; Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, April 21, 1953, Box 17, Flynn Papers; Flynn to George E. Sokolsky, September 28, 1949, Box 50, Folder 5, Sokolsky Papers.

34. Flynn to Edward A. Rumely, November 1, 1951, Box 17, Flynn Papers; “BtH: Paying the Bills for Communism,” 157, May 4, 1952, Box 14, *ibid.*; Flynn to David I. Johnson, July 31, 1952, Box 34, Folder 22, Crain Papers; Flynn to B. Carroll Reece, April 20, 1953, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right*, 271.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 14

1. John B. Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (New York: Touchstone, 1988), 104–11.

2. Flynn to Karl E. Mundt, March 15, 1954, Box 20, Flynn Papers; Flynn, *McCarthy*, 6–7, 11.

3. Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.*, 112–13.

4. Miles, *Odyssey of the American Right*, 25–27.

5. John T. Flynn, “The Republic in Crisis,” *Human Events* 12:41 (October 8, 1955): 1–4; John T. Flynn, “The Roosevelt Myth: A Reappraisal,” *Human*

Events 14:17 (April 27, 1957): 1–4; Lindsey Rogers, “Dark Alliance,” *Saturday Review of Literature* 38 (October 1, 1955): 31.

6. William F. Buckley to Flynn, September 15, 1955, Box 17, Flynn Papers.
7. Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.*, 136; John T. Flynn, “A Rejected Manuscript,” in Gregory P. Pavlik (ed.), *Forgotten Lessons: Selected Essays of John T. Flynn* (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: Foundation for Economic Education, 1996), 129–34; William F. Buckley, Jr., to Flynn, October 22, 1955, Box 17, Flynn Papers.
8. Justin Raimondo, “National Review’s Military Socialism,” Antiwar.com, February 11, 2002, at <http://www.antiwar.com/justin/j021102.html>, accessed January 7, 2004; McManus, “Principles First.”
9. Flynn to William F. Buckley, October 23, 1955, Box 17, Flynn Papers; William F. Buckley to Flynn, October 24, 1955, *ibid.*; Rosalie Gordon to William F. Buckley, November 17, 1955, *ibid.*
10. “BtH,” M196, October 27, 1957, Box 14, Flynn Papers; “BtH,” M290, August 16, 1959, Box 15, *ibid.*; “BtH,” M206, January 5, 1958, Box 14, *ibid.*; “BtH,” M178, June 23, 1957, *ibid.*
11. Benjamin R. Epstein and Arnold Forster, *The Radical Right: Report on the John Birch Society and Its Allies* (New York: Random House, 1966), 210–11; “BtH,” M206, January 5, 1958, Box 14, Flynn Papers; Flynn to National Renaissance Party, August 30, 1954, Box 19, *ibid.*; Flynn to Conde McGinley, December 9, 1953, Box 18, *ibid.*
12. Alfred Kohlberg to Flynn, July 5, 1955, and August 22, 1955, Box 64, Kohlberg Papers.
13. Flynn to Gerald P. Nye, February 19, 1957, Box 19, Flynn Papers; John T. Flynn, *The Decline of the American Republic, and How to Rebuild It* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1955), 165.
14. Flynn to David B. Cole, November 1, 1954, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Harry T. Everingham, March 28, 1956, Box 20, *ibid.*; Flynn to Orville J. Taylor, May 13, 1954, Box 17, *ibid.*; Flynn to Robert E. Wood, September 9, 1952, Box 20, *ibid.*; John T. Flynn, “Fifty Million Americans in Search of a Party,” *American Mercury* 80 (February 1955): 5–10.
15. Clark Getts to Flynn, June 25, 1955, Box 18, Flynn Papers; Flynn to Clark Getts, June 28, 1955, *ibid.*; Flynn to Henry Regnery, November 12, 1957, Box 19, *ibid.*
16. Flynn, *Decline of the American Republic*, 5, 165.
17. “BtH,” M187, August 25, 1957, Box 14, Flynn Papers; “BtH,” M305, November 29, 1959, Box 15, *ibid.*; “BtH,” M11, April 11, 1954, Box 14, *ibid.*; “BtH,” M190, September 15, 1957, *ibid.*; “BtH,” M194, October 13, 1957, *ibid.*; “BtH,” M125, June 17, 1956, *ibid.*; “BtH,” M178, June 23, 1957, *ibid.*; “BtH,” M291, August 23, 1959, Box 15, *ibid.*; “BtH,” M290, August 16, 1959, *ibid.*

18. Flynn to Harry Elmer Barnes, April 22, 1957, Box 17, Flynn Papers; “Outline,” undated, Box 32, ibid.; “BtH,” M355, November 13, 1960, Box 15, ibid.
19. Nelson and Roberts, *Censors and the Schools*, 103–4; Flynn to J. B. Matthews, October 29, 1957, Matthews Papers.
20. Frey, “John T. Flynn,” 338–39.
21. *New York Times*, April 14, 1964; “John T. Flynn, RIP,” *National Review* 16 (May 5, 1964): 345–46.

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. Examples include Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Dave Farber and Jeff Roche (eds.), *The Conservative Sixties* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); John A. Andrew III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Gregory L. Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2002); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Jonathan Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
2. The classic treatment of this subject remains Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945*.
3. Graham, *Encore for Reform*.
4. John T. Flynn, “OPM: How to Tell a Liberal,” *New Republic* 100 (August 16, 1939): 47; Flynn to Jerome N. Frank, September 18, 1940, Flynn Papers, Box 20.
5. James P. Young, *Reconsidering American Liberalism: The Troubled Odyssey of the Liberal Idea* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 170–71.
6. Flynn, “Why a Liberal Party?” 161–63.
7. Ibid., 163.
8. John T. Flynn, “What Liberalism Means to Me,” *American Mercury* 67 (August 1948): 169–76.
9. T. P. Yeatman, Jr., “Save-Our-Schools, Inc.: Strange Case of Mr. Flynn,” *The Nation* 177 (August 15, 1953): 128–30; John T. Flynn, “OPM,” *New Republic* 88 (September 9, 1936): 129–30; Lawrence Dennis to Harry Elmer Barnes, January 15, 1948, Box 2, Dennis Papers.
10. Diary entries, undated, Box 32, Flynn Papers.

11. Lawrence Dennis to Harry Elmer Barnes, January 31, 1952, and January 25, 1952, Box 2, Dennis Papers.
12. Richard W. Steele, *Propaganda in an Open Society: The Roosevelt Administration and the Media, 1933–1941* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1985); O'Reilly, "A New Deal for the FBI"; Ribuffo, *Old Christian Right*.
13. John T. Flynn, "Socialism and Our Colleges" *American Mercury* 80 (April 1955): 107; Flynn, "Eggheads through History," *The Freeman*, February 5, 1954, Box 12, Flynn Papers.
14. Andrew, *Other Side of the Sixties*, 68–69.
15. "Duped? It Can Happen to You!" *American Legion Post Script* 22:8 (February 24, 1950): 5.

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